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COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

Scarcity &
Abundance

All We Have Is
All We Need

ECOBARRIOS

AS IS: Secrets to
Having Enough

FREE TO SERVE:
Notes from a
Needs-Based Economy

From Car and House
to Bicycle and Tent



Winter 2008 • Issue #141

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communities.ic.org

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."

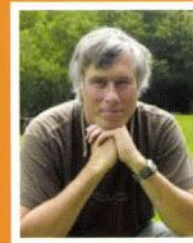
– Alice Jacobs Ed.D., MS;
Senior education and learning specialist

"... 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:

McCamant & Durrett
Architects
1250 Addison Street #113
Berkeley, CA 94702.
ph. 510.549.9980

or

Online at
www.cohousingco.com

\$34.55 (USA), \$38.00 (Canada & Mexico), \$40.95 (other locations in the world). Prices include shipping & handling.



WASHINGTON
VILLAGE

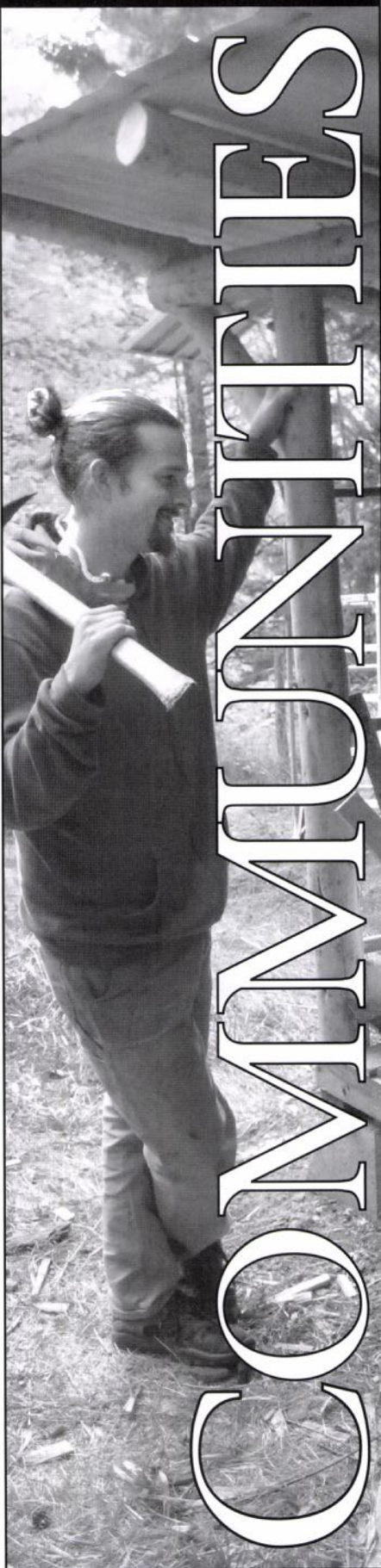
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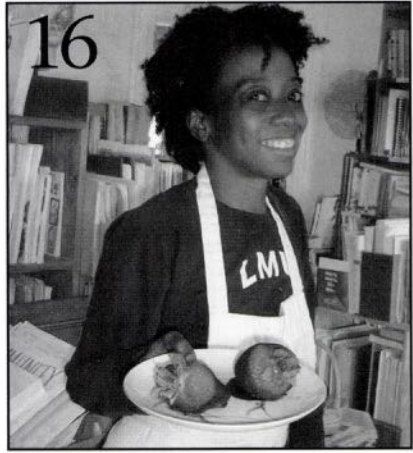
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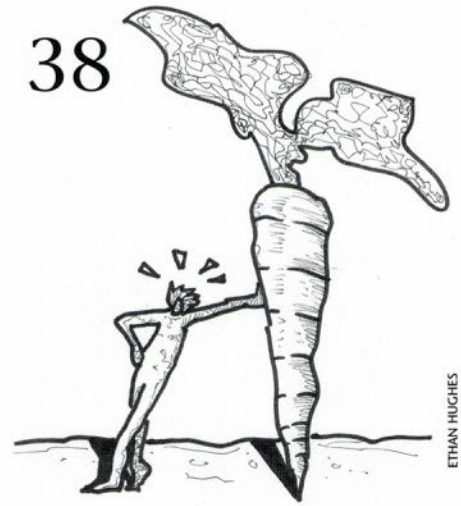




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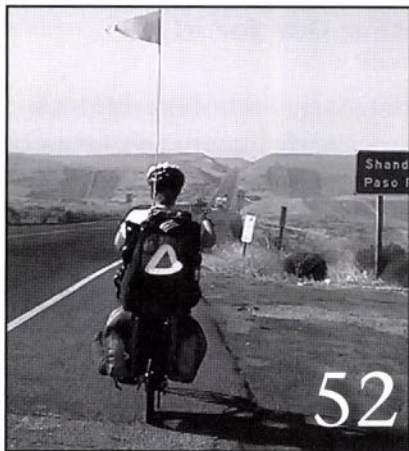
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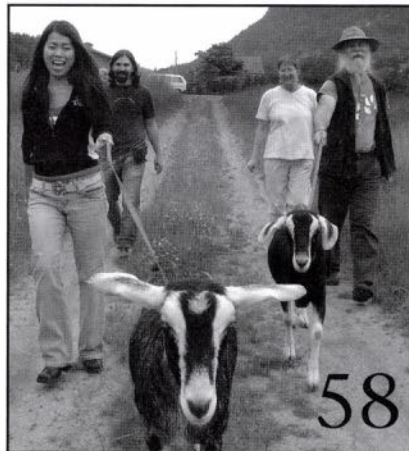
ETHAN HUGHES

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CHRIS ROTH

COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

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COMMUNITIES (ISSN 0199-9346) is published quarterly by the Fellowship for Intentional Community at Rt 1 Box 156, Rutledge MO 63563. Periodicals postage paid at Rutledge MO and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to COMMUNITIES, 138 Twin Oaks Rd, Louisa VA 23093. Indexed in the Alternative Press Index.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$24 US, \$29 Canada, \$31 outside US/Canada for four issues via periodical/surface mail. Single copies are \$7 US, \$8 Canada, \$9 outside US/Canada. All payments in US dollars. Available from COMMUNITIES, 138 Twin Oaks Rd, Louisa VA 23093; order@ic.org, or order online at store.ic.org.

BACK ISSUES: Rt 1 Box 156, Rutledge MO 63563; 800-995-8342.

EDITORIAL OFFICE: COMMUNITIES, 81868 Lost Valley Ln, Dexter OR 97431; 541-937-2567 x116; editor@ic.org.

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FELLOWSHIP FOR INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY: Rt 1 Box 156, Rutledge MO 63563; 660-883-5545; www.ic.org.

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ADVERTISING: John Stroup, Business Manager, 10385 Magnolia Rd, Sullivan MO 63080; 573-468-8822; ads@ic.org.

WEB SITE: communities.ic.org.

This magazine printed on recycled paper, using soy-based inks, at Allen Press in Lawrence, Kansas, USA.

LETTERS



Send your comments to editor@ic.org or COMMUNITIES, 81868 Lost Valley Ln, Dexter, OR 97431. Your letters may be edited or shortened. Thank you!

A Reader for #139

Your Green Building issue was great! [#139] Read it cover to cover and would like to cast my vote on ending with poetry. I thought it was a very moving way to say “until next time” and hope you will continue it for a while to give others a chance to warm up to it. I wondered if the magazine used recycled paper but I know that’s sometimes more expensive and it sounds like adding to the printing price is not a welcome idea. Anyway, I hope you keep the boat afloat! Thanks for your hard work.

Sincerely,

Windy Rhodes
Englewood, Florida

[Editor’s note: We ended issue #140 with a memorial tribute to communities founder and visionary Kat Kinkade. We are open to ending with poetry if we receive suitable poetry—but for now, we’ll be experimenting with different ways to fill the back page. Readers, we welcome your suggestions and submissions. And yes, we print COMMUNITIES on recycled paper using soy-based inks at Allen Press in Lawrence, Kansas.]

Another One for #140

Great issue!—the first I’ve read somewhat completely through perhaps ever. I won’t take the time to analyze why, though (well, I do, a bit). And unfortunately I won’t be renewing as I’ll now be living more nomadically, cheaply, leaving interest in formal community somewhat behind.

I guess #140 addresses my more anarchistic/network/somewhat community-apprehensive leaning. Has update from carfree hero Hughes. The e-list dialog summary. The impressive, beautiful Europeans from Tamera (been curious). Was in Seattle when Nick Licata was running. The Morningstar story gets a bit at desire to avoid community process. The idea of creating community where you are appeals—like Thich Nhat Hanh—“your sangha can be everything/we need the formal sangha.” Often, not living in community beyond occasional meetings with fellow activists, I’d just skip over all the stuff focusing on business and process, difficult members, etc. Moving from suburban-type isolation of “the middle” (a power lab/Barry Oshry concept), crossing the boundary to transformation, vision, growth—has been an ongoing question. How do I get out of my rut, create, help, serve? Together, with others? Will be wandering about, meeting whoever happens to be there, sometimes with that in mind.

Peace,

Colin Leath
San Diego, California



**Theme for
Our Next Issue**
(COMMUNITIES #142, Spring 2009)
Festivals and Gatherings

A Linguistic Quibble

Thanks for the copy.

A linguistic quibble: in your introduction [to "Email, Politics, and Permaculture," COMMUNITIES #140], you suggest that [Eugene Mayor] Kitty Piercy is the "progressive" incumbent. Councilor Bonny Bettman, the local elected official who has been the most effective challenger of the pave-everything agenda of the bureaucracy, says "Kitty is not a progressive." I have long thought that "progressive" merely means a liberal who doesn't want to use the "L" word because the Republicans have ridiculed that word—it is political rhetoric that doesn't add much to a discussion.

Being non-partisan is not popular, but it makes it easier to scrutinize government actions with a consistent perspective. We need to move beyond false debates (left/right, Democrat/Republican) to understand deeper complexities. The only binary choice I can relate to is survival vs. extinction, but that doesn't translate into the political realm.

www.greenwasheugene.com is undergoing some long overdue improvements to make it less cluttered and more user-friendly. Please take a minute to tell your favorite (or least favorite) local officials that spending hundreds of millions of your tax dollars to widen highways in the metro area would be a tremendous waste of energy and money as we pass Peak Oil. Meanwhile, funding for our bus system is jeopardized because all of the local politicians chose to ignore the warnings about Peak Oil and rising gasoline prices, so even though bus ridership is up, Lane Transit District cannot afford to pay for the service and is going to raise rates and cut service. (See also www.road-scholar.org.)

Mark Robinowitz
Eugene, Oregon

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Dear COMMUNITIES,

Could you please offer me a free subscription in your valuable magazine (hard copy edition) due to my very limited resources? It's hard to find it here in Morocco. My address is: Mr. Elhassan Errezzaki, Douar Tarna Aday, Anezi 85100, Morocco.

Thanks very very very very much in advance,

Mr. Elhassan Errezzaki
Anezi, Morocco

[Editor's note: In the spirit of this issue's "abundance" theme, we invite readers to consider supporting this request by giving a gift subscription or by donating to a fund to help us fulfill this and similar requests. Thanks in advance to anyone who can help.]

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Subscriptions to COMMUNITIES supply a major portion of the "life blood" that allows us to publish (much more, in financial terms, than newsstand sales do). As we strive to become financially self-sufficient and then to reinvest in making the magazine even better, every subscription dollar makes a difference to us.

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THE ART OF COMMUNITY

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Include

Laird Schaub, Sandhill Farm, Executive Secretary of the FIC
Caroline Estes, Alpha Farm
Tony Sirna, Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage
Harvey Baker, Dunmire Hollow
Ma'ikwe Schaub Ludwig, Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage, author
Passion as Big as a Planet: Evolving Eco-Activism in America

Next Art of Community: the San Francisco Bay Area, Fall 2009

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 or shared projects.

Through fact, fiction, and opinion, we offer fresh ideas about how to live and work 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 also seek articles about cooperative ventures of all sorts—in workplaces, in neighborhoods, among people sharing common interests—and about “creating community where you are.”

We do not intend to promote one kind of group 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 thematically to community living and/or cooperation, 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 Writers' Guidelines: COMMUNITIES, 81868 Lost Valley Ln, Dexter OR 97431; 541-937-2567 x116; editor@ic.org. To obtain Photo Guidelines, email: layout@ic.org. Both are also available online at 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. As in the COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY, we edit our REACH listings only for clarity and length, and can't guarantee that all community information contained in them is accurate—we encourage you to verify it as you pursue your interest in a group.

John Stroup, Advertising Manager, 10385 Magnolia Rd, Sullivan MO 63080; 573-468-8822; ads@ic.org.

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; 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.

My Journey with Money: Finding Cooperative Leverage in a Competitive World

Editor's note: At our request, Laird adapted the following article from his “Community and Consensus” blog at communityandconsensus.blogspot.com, since it seemed particularly relevant to this issue's Scarcity and Abundance theme.

I grew up in the Republican suburbs of Chicago, and have a large amount of privilege by mainstream standards. I'm white, male, well-educated, articulate, financially successful, and happily married with two grown kids—I've got everything but hair. My father was successful in business and I was expected to be as well. I have no doubt that I could make lots of money if I set my sights on that goal (that is, I could “win” in the current system).

I did not grow up rich, just comfortably middle class. The most important thing I got out of my upbringing was a strong sense of self-confidence. As I understand it today, this is the result of: a) my privilege; b) feeling secure in my parents' love; and c) my never having experienced any serious deprivation growing up (my basic needs were always met). So the first piece of my money puzzle was understanding that I had serious advantages.

While my father had plenty of money, and seemed to enjoy making it, it was also clear that he wasn't happy. In fact, I came to understand by the time I went to college that he was profoundly lonely. It was a potent wake-up call to see my father—who was clearly a success by societal standards—not happy. I wanted

no part of repeating that experience. So my second piece of the puzzle was learning early on the limitations of what money can buy.

I went to college from 1967-71, during the height of Vietnam protests. It was a period of unprecedented unrest on campus and I was smack in the middle of it. I burst out of my conservative cocoon and started questioning damn near everything. I loved the intensity of the inquiry and enjoyed my first tastes of community—dor-

mitory living with my peers—though I didn't have that label for it at the time. These were exciting times, and it was during this stretch that the next puzzle piece emerged: I was drawn to social change work, and I knew that I was going to be a “builder-upper” rather than a “tearer-downer.” I had seen both roles showcased in those years of protest, and it was quickly apparent to me that I enjoyed putting together solutions more than I relished pulling the scales from others' eyes.

Upon graduation, I knew I was supposed to get a job (in the same way that I knew that I was supposed to go to college after high school). Already oriented toward wanting to make a difference, it seemed a good idea to explore public

PUBLISHER'S NOTE



BY
LAIRD SCHAUB

service, and for two years I worked for the US Dept of Transportation as a junior bureaucrat. As it turned out, it was the only regular 9-5, Monday-Friday job I ever had. I worked for the then-magnificent salary of \$7000/year, and saved money. (The two main components of this were shared housing and not owning a vehicle; it's incredible how much you can avoid spending if you live that way.)

While it didn't take me long to grok that this would not be my most productive environment (too much bullshit, not enough

It was highly instructive to see that I was the lowest paid person in my division and yet I was the only one not reporting a shortage of disposable income.

action), it was a valuable experience nonetheless. It was, for example, highly instructive to see that I was the lowest paid person in my division (12 professionals and seven secretaries), and yet I was the

only one not reporting a shortage of disposable income. People in that office spent to the limit of their income (or beyond). Sure, they had bigger houses and nicer clothes, yet they didn't seem any more fulfilled for all of that. This reinforced my inclination to not enter the consumer rat race. What was the point? I also realized that I had lost the excitement and stimulation of college days. Maybe I'd made a mistake. Instead of focusing first on career possibilities and rebuilding a network of relationships in whatever job came along, perhaps I should have done it the other way around: focus first on the people and let the job follow. In February 1973 I was in a public library and happened across the current issue of *Psychology Today*. It included an excerpt from a new book by Kat Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment*. It described the first five years of Twin Oaks Community in central Virginia, and it changed my life. "Community" was the label I was searching for to

describe what was precious to me about my college days. So now I had another important piece: people first; money second.

By August I had retired from public service and began serious conversations with college friends about starting our own community, to recreate that special environment. By the following spring, we had founded Sandhill Farm: four people willing to give it a try.

Because Twin Oaks was the inspiration and because I'd already done a fair amount of work disentangling myself from materialism, we set up Sandhill as an income-sharing community, where all earnings would be pooled. We still operate that way today.

The four of us were able to buy the land and expand the housing to meet our needs with cash (about \$20,000). A significant fraction of that was saved from my two years with DOT. I was 24 years old and had just jointly bought land in northeast Missouri. I had no job (or even an inkling of how we were going to make the finances work), but we also had no debt.

The Community Years

From this point on, I began working seriously to develop a viable economic model that was quite different from any I had known before. Here are the components of what I've done:

- Drastically reduced my need for money to supply basic needs, by living in a homesteading community that shared income.
- Worked consciously to expand the range of things that give me high satisfaction. (Essentially this is about cultivating curiosity.)

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- Insisted that the highest possible fraction of what I do is things I love to do.
- Defined work broadly (hint: value both domestic and income-producing activities as “work”).
- Blurred the line between work and play.
- Worked, to the extent possible, only when I wanted to work.
- Brought my full passion into everything I did.
- Defined success to encompass enjoying the process, as well as completing the project.

By having lots of things that attract me, I have a wide variety of work. Because I also have considerable control of my time, this affords me an important degree of flexibility. Whenever I get tired of one thing (or seem to have lost my creative edge), I simply lay it down and do something different. By adhering to this strategy I am able to maintain an unusually high degree of enthusiasm for what I do, and rarely get run down.

Pricing Myself

I do a lot of things that make money. Yet money doesn't drive me. Having a low need for cash (by American standards) gives me considerable leverage in the marketplace. As a process consultant

(my most remunerative activity), I know that my services are valuable (I price myself as worth \$1200/day, plus expenses) and that's what I tell prospective clients whenever they ask about fees. However, in the same breath, I tell them that I don't want money to get in the way of the work and that I'll agree to do the job (assuming I'm interested in it) for what they can afford. That is, I tell them that I'll say “yes” to whatever amount they put on the table, without quibbling. The only requirement is that they have a conversation (without me present) about what they can afford. What I don't do is offer discounts up front. I insist they have the conversation about what the work is worth. And then I trust their answer.

In consequence, I get paid all over the map. Sometimes I work for a pittance, or even pro bono. In the end though, taken as a whole, I get paid plenty and I am able to ignore the paycheck when doing the work.

I have one last puzzle piece to share. I've derived considerable satisfaction out of creating jobs where there were none before. Rather than out-competing others for existing jobs, I've focused on identifying an unmet need and then figured out a way to meet it. I've talked people

into supporting me as a volunteer long enough to demonstrate the job's worth, and then gotten the work funded. After a while, my interests would shift, I'd find someone to replace me, and I'd create a new job. I've gone through about six cycles of this, and can feel the next one coming.

After two decades establishing myself as a process consultant in the field of intentional communities, I am poised to widen my focus to bring the lessons and tools of cooperative dynamics into the wider culture—among neighborhood associations, nonprofits, churches, and the workplace—where the commitment to community and cooperation is softer, yet the numbers yearning for something better are exponentially higher.

The beauty of this approach to life is that I am earning a sustainable income while pursuing happiness, not in order to pursue happiness. Why do it any other way? ❁

Laird Schaub is executive secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), publisher of this magazine, and cofounder of Sandhill Farm community in Missouri, where he lives. He authors a blog which can be read at communityandconsensus.blogspot.com.

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Notes from the Business Manager:

A Social Entrepreneur



V. LEROSIGNNOL

My first experience at bartering came during elementary school when I began trading my oranges, apples, and bananas on the school bus with those kids who brought Hostess pies and cakes. They were sick of the sweets their moms packed away and my family had a 10-pound bag of fruit at home.

When I began walking to school I had to pass an old-fashioned hardware store that sold penny candy, wax gum, and soda pop from returnable bottles. The first day, I bought enough candy for myself. When I reached into my backpack to sneak a piece of taffy, I noticed a few of my classmates' eyes light up. It didn't take me long to turn my \$1.10 in daily lunch money into a handful of candy, which I marked up enough to cover my lunches for a week. Candy was scarce in Mr. Watkins' 3rd grade class and I was the only supplier.

Fast forward 20 years or so and I was still an entrepreneur running a very small publishing company from my rural outpost near St. Louis, Missouri. I spent most of my time publishing the pictorial histories of immigrant communities, helping them raise money for their causes.

During my MBA, I tried to develop a more commercial model for publishing by building a historic calendars business, but felt disconnect from commerce with no specific mission. While I didn't get out of the commercial publishing business entirely, most of my clients are small, community banks with little-to-no marketing budgets.

As the new business manager for COMMUNITIES magazine, I feel like I've found

the perfect niche for an entrepreneurial publisher, like myself, with a social bent.

While the economic news of the day may be confusing and bleak, I can't feel anything but energized about the future because of the communarians, activists, builders, educators, entrepreneurs, and others that I get to connect with through COMMUNITIES magazine.

What's even more exciting is the magazine's readership. The half of you who subscribe to COMMUNITIES often live and work in community, cohousing, natural building, permaculture, and shared spiritual movements. And the other half of you who buy from the newsstand are a group starved for the "best practices" developed in community that can be applied to your everyday life. Seekers say COMMUNITIES magazine is their starting point on a path that may help them find their new homes.

We know that many more people would benefit from COMMUNITIES magazine—but they currently lack access to it or even knowledge that it exists. Can you help us spread the word? There are several concrete things that every current COMMUNITIES reader can do to get more people reading and inspired into action by COMMUNITIES:

Give gift subscriptions. You probably know at least several people and/or

groups for whom what you are reading in these pages would be relevant. Subscriptions to COMMUNITIES have a crit-

ical impact on our ability to publish—much more, in financial terms, than newsstand sales. As a magazine striving to become financially self-sufficient and then to reinvest in making the magazine even better, subscriptions are incredibly important to us.

We are a small operation and every dollar makes a difference to us.

Ask your local natural food store, bookstore, or alternative newsstand to carry COMMUNITIES.

All major national magazine distributors and several small ones can supply COMMUNITIES to stores upon request—but stores need to request it. Our magazine is popular on newsstands, and garners new readers and subscribers—but it needs to appear there first. Stores have nothing to lose (except a small amount of rack space) by stocking it—they pay only for what sells. Please encourage them to carry it!

Encourage your local public, school, and university libraries to subscribe to COMMUNITIES, or give them gift subscriptions. COMMUNITIES is popular in libraries that carry it—but librarians need to learn about it first. Please ask your librarian to subscribe. If

We know that many more people would benefit from COMMUNITIES magazine—but they currently lack access to it or even knowledge that it exists. Can you help us spread the word?

the library is short on funds, consider subscribing for the library. (It's wise to arrange this with the library ahead of time—some libraries won't accept gift subscriptions without preapproval.)

Become a distributor yourself. If you believe you will be able to sell COMMUNITIES yourself to friends, at festivals or other public events, from your home community, or through local stores who don't order from national distributors, we will be happy to work with you. Contact the COMMUNITIES Business Manager at ads@ic.org or 573-468-8822. Distributors receive a percentage of the sale price of each magazine sold—so both you and COMMUNITIES benefit.

Advertise, and/or encourage others to advertise. If your event, service, or product is a good match for COMMUNITIES readers, there may be no better place to advertise. Advertisers report excellent results in our pages, and many (as you'll notice) repeat issue after issue. Advertising is a significant source of financial support for the magazine, and is an essential part of our efforts to balance the budget and fund continued improvement of our journal and its reach.

Recommend it to others. Simple word-of-mouth recommendations to friends can work wonders. Mentioning COMMUNITIES on blogs and in articles elsewhere can also help others discover the magazine. We can supply printed support materials if you'd like to engage in more formal outreach (please contact us).

Contribute writing, illustrations, and/or photos. Without the efforts of our many contributors (who are compensated with magazine copies, rather than with money), we would have no magazine. Creating and submitting material to COMMUNITIES can be fun, educational, and a great way to inform and inspire others about cooperative endeavors and community projects while sharing your own experiences.

(continued on p. 71)

In Community, Intentionally

Part 1

At the COMMUNITIES staff summit held at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage in September 2008, we identified several additional columns that could enhance the magazine's value to a broad spectrum of readers. "Community 101" was the most popular new idea, and we debut it in this issue. The following introduction to intentional community is excerpted from an article in COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY 2007. Author Geoph Kozeny was a long-time COMMUNITIES contributor and well-loved "peripatetic communitarian" before his untimely death in October 2007. His "Visions of Utopia," a full-length video documentary on intentional communities, appeared in 2002, and a second volume will be released at the end of this year. Part 2 of this article will appear in the Spring issue.

"I want more of a sense of community in my life." It seems like you hear people saying that all the time these days. What's remarkable is that this inspiration is not coming only from folks that might be called alternative—I hear it from people representing a wide spectrum of values, ideals, and lifestyles.

Not surprisingly, intentional communities also represent a wide spectrum of values and ideas. For thousands of years people have been coming together to share their lives in creative and diverse ways. Today is no different; efforts to create new lifestyles based on shared ideals are as common as ever.

Pursuing Dreams

All intentional communities have idealism in common—each one was founded on a vision of living in a better way, usually in response to something perceived as lacking in the broader culture. Many communities aspire to pro-

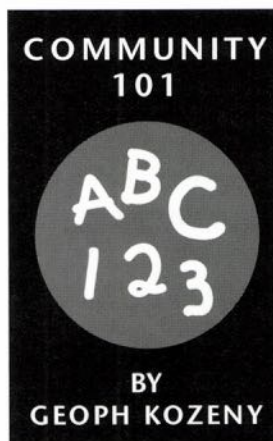
vide a supportive environment for the development of members' awareness, abilities, and spiritual growth. Most seek

to create a life that will satisfy shared human cravings: security, family, relationship, fellowship, mutual cooperation, creativity and self-expression, as well as a sense of place, a sense of belonging.

Typically, today's intentional communities are melting pots of ideals and issues that have been in the public spotlight over

the decades: equality and civil rights, women's liberation, antiwar efforts, ecology and conservation, alternative energy, sustainable agriculture, co-ops, worker-owned businesses, personal growth, and spirituality. Some groups focus on only one or a few of these areas, while others try to integrate them all to a coherent whole.

Although intentional communities are usually on the fringes of mainstream culture, the everyday values and priorities of community members are surprisingly compatible with those of their less



adventurous counterparts. Both tend to assign value to providing a stable home and good education for their children, finding meaningful and satisfying work, living in a safe neighborhood and an unpolluted environment, and participating in local organizations and activities. For many, finding a spiritual path is also important as it can provide a context for the other goals and a basis for making decisions in times of uncertainty. The main difference is that most community members are not satisfied with the status quo. Intentional communities are testing grounds for new ideas about how to maintain more satisfying lives that enable people to actualize more of their untapped potential.

Time Is Not Standing Still

Most communities sound very clear and confident when describing their values, goals, and practices, but such things inevitably evolve over time. When you come across a documentary or a directory listing that profiles a community, I suggest thinking of the description as a snapshot in their family scrapbook. Most of the images—the people, the buildings, the activities, the priorities, even the visions—are subject to change over time.

I'm amazed at the number of times I've heard someone say, "I couldn't live in a community without this," or "I could never live in a community that did that"—only to interview them several years later and discover that they were happily living without the former and with the latter. I suspect this lack of wisdom about what we really need and

want is due, in part, to the fact that society does not adequately teach us to explore this type of question. Obviously, people's needs change over time, as well. On that individual level, needs change as a person matures. On a societal level, cultural values and norms shift for many, often inter-related, reasons.

Major changes do occasionally occur overnight in communities. However, it is far more common for large shifts to happen over a more extended period of time. For example, I've visited at least a dozen communities that were radically political in their

early years, usually with a population of members mostly in their 20s. Within 20 years, the members—now in their 40s—had shifted their focus to improving the quality of their kids' schools, worrying about health concerns, and making plans for their old age.

A Unique Experience

Contrary to popular stereotypes, every branch of the family portrayed in the "scrapbook" is unique. Just as no two brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, or cousins lead identical lives, no two communities offer precisely the same experience. In the Catholic Worker network, for example, all the houses are based on a core philosophy that was articulated in the 1930s, yet no two are the same. Each community varies according to the number and ages of members, the projects emphasized, local laws and customs, and the cultural backgrounds and personalities of their members.

Likewise, the level of affluence in intentional communities runs the gamut
(continued on p. 75)

For thousands of years people have been coming together to share their lives in creative and diverse ways. Today is no different; efforts to create new lifestyles based on shared ideals are as common as ever.

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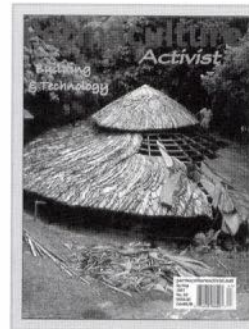


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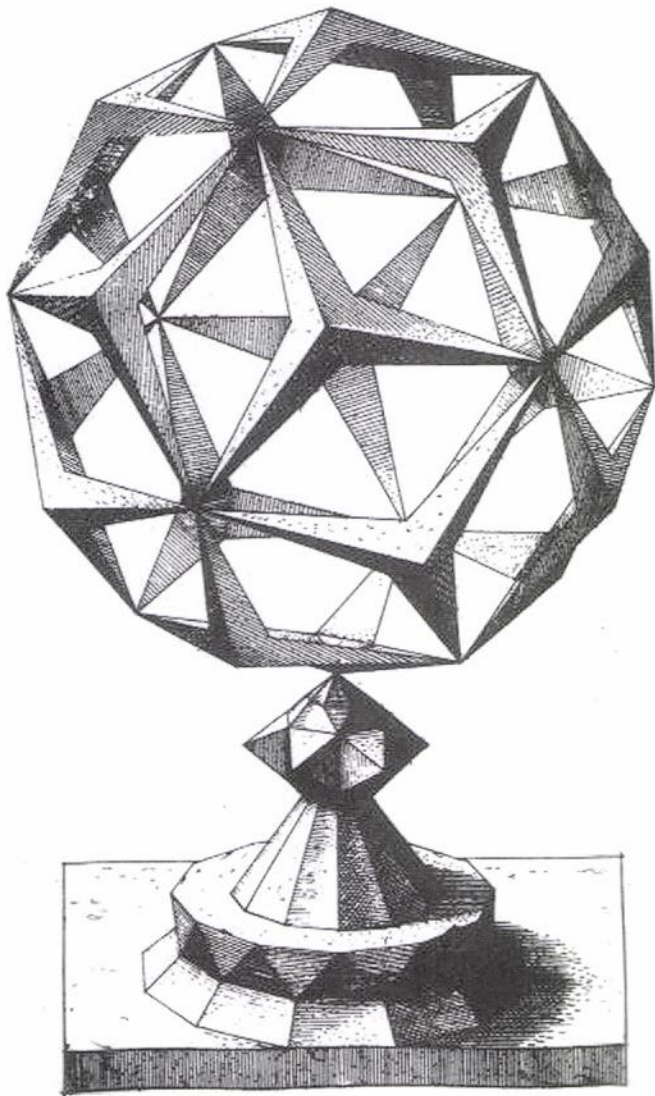
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Good Meetings:

BEST

Q *“The theme of this issue being scarcity and abundance, how about, instead of hearing yet another crisis or problem to solve, we focus on abundance as it relates to meetings? Please tell us a story of one of the best meetings you ever attended (as participant or facilitator). What was great about it? What do you think made it turn out so well?”*



Tree Bressen responds:

Upon thinking this question over, I've realized that my responses fall into two categories: One is that I love it when a group that's *not* in crisis calls me for facilitation; often this happens for community visioning. The second category consists of decent outcomes to intensely challenging situations, including when the result is an amicable “divorce” between one or two members and the rest of the group. I'm writing story #1 here; perhaps a story from category #2 will appear in the future.

A few months ago a local ecovillage hired me to facilitate their visioning process. While there had been people living together on site for several years already, over time the group was gelling and becoming more intentional, and now they were ready to take the next step of drawing up vision documents together. When I met with the core team initially, they stated a clear goal of coming up with a vision statement within a one-day meeting of the full group, and filled me in

on various other issues they hoped to address. I warned them that there was only so much we could accomplish in one day, and promised to do the best that I could.

Shortly before the date of the meeting itself, a dear friend with many years of group experience challenged me on the topic of visioning. “What's the point of it?” he asked. “Have you ever really seen a community use its vision statement to any real effect?” His query and our rousing conversation pushed me to clarify my own thinking. I realized that the groups I'd seen use their core documents in a way that felt alive had more than just one or two sentences; they had a set of basic principles that were meaningful to them.

On the day of the meeting, we got off to a good start. I employed an “Appreciative Inquiry” process, using a mixture of interviews, small group discussions, and other formats, and the group seemed to respond well. But as the day went on, members started approaching me one-on-one to warn that dissent was fomenting in some of the small groups. Chronic issues were reemerging during this process, and some people were starting to get triggered and upset. What to do?

MEETINGS

I was concerned that if we took the focus off visioning in order to address the upsets, the group might not meet its goal of coming up with a statement by the end of the day. At the same time, glossing over the difficulties seemed disingenuous. Thinking back to the conversation with my friend, i realized that a visioning process should include the possibility of grappling with real issues for that group, not just coming up with a glossy statement that nearly any community could sign off on. I suggested that we come back together into one big group, and give some time to the biggest controversy in the room, which turned out to be about membership standards (that is, how far did this group want to open the door to residency?).

The members were committed to listening well to each other, and each person understood that theirs was not the only

*I enjoyed an
"Appreciative
Inquiry" process.*

—TREE BRESSEN

viewpoint in the room and that they might not get their way. The two people holding the poles of the discussion had a friendly relationship with each other outside the context of this particular meeting. A few times while facilitating i fell into treating dissenting opinions as problems instead of as "a piece of the truth," but then caught myself and pulled back into a wider and more welcoming frame. After about an hour of discussion, all these factors resulted in an agreement to have membership standards and the beginnings of a rough outline as to what those expectations would be.

After that we returned to the visioning process, and successfully passed a statement, thanks in part to the grace of one member who stood aside with some concerns, knowing he could suggest revisions later. In this particular case, we started with a statement that happened to be drafted by the community founder, but revised it substantially before the group agreed to it. There was even time for a bit of wordsmithing—in spite of the groans, i figure that one good thing about wordsmithing

is that if a group reaches that stage, it means the more substantive issues have been resolved!

Furthermore, the group adopted a stepped-up schedule of meetings in order to stay connected with each other, move additional pieces of the visioning process forward, and keep addressing other community issues. All in all, i was impressed with how well the group worked together. The community founder, a builder rather than a process person who'd been skeptical of our plan for the day, was naturally quite pleased when we emerged with three key agreements (vision statement, membership, new meeting schedule). I felt deeply trusted by the group, and was able to use their faith in me to help serve them powerfully.

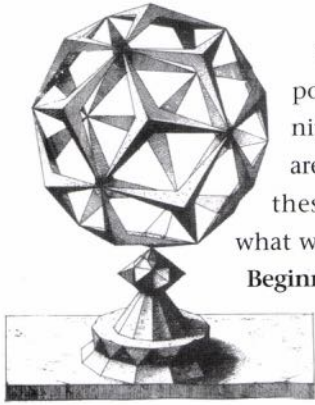
Tree Bressen is a group process consultant based in Eugene, Oregon, who works with intentional communities and other organizations on how to have meetings that are lively, productive, and connecting. Her website, www.treegroup.info, offers extensive free resources on consensus, facilitation, and more. (Tree uses a lower-case "i" in her articles as an expression of egalitarian values.)



Beatrice Briggs responds:

Some of the best meetings I have attended in Huehucoyotl, the ecovillage in Mexico where I live, were planned and facilitated by a group of 10-12 visiting university students.

For the past four years, in collaboration with Living Routes (www.livingroutes.org), we have hosted a three-week course in "Leadership for Social Change." The curriculum includes training in group facilitation and consensus decision-making. Using these tools, the students research options for a community service project, prepare and present a proposal to the community and, if it is accepted, implement the plan.



The meetings at which the proposal is presented to the community are consistently excellent. Here are some thoughts about what makes these meetings so memorable and what we can learn from them.

Beginner's mind. The meetings are 100% planned and facilitated by the students, who bring fresh energy and enthusiasm to the task.

Having just learned the basics of consensus decision-making, they do not cut corners on the process. **LESSON:** Do not become jaded in our approach to community meetings.

Short, single-focus agenda. The meetings have only one issue on the agenda, i.e., the project proposal, and are scheduled to last 45-60 minutes. **LESSON:** Most of our agendas tend to be packed with a too-long list of disparate topics and go on for what seems like forever. Sometimes it is better to focus on a single issue—and then adjourn before everyone is exhausted.

By the time the meeting starts, they have explored the issue in depth and fully “own” their proposal.

—BEATRICE BRIGGS

decision makers at this stage in the process. **LESSON:** Too often we arrive at meetings with no idea of what we will be asked to do or why it may be important.

Solid preparation, dynamic presentation. The students struggle among themselves to define criteria, gather information, and develop and evaluate options before reaching a decision on what they want to present. By the time the meeting starts, they have explored the issue in depth and fully “own” their proposal. The whole team works on preparing a dynamic, visual presentation that explains clearly what they propose to do, why, and how. **LESSON LEARNED:** Do not come to a meeting with only a vague, poorly documented idea and expect the large group to spend hours making sense of the issue in plenary. Delegate the preliminary thinking to a small group.

While none of the student proposals have ever been turned down, neither are they automatically approved. The community members ask penetrating questions, make useful suggestions, and propose modifications before reaching a decision.

Nevertheless, the students' initiative, creativity, enthusiasm, and solidarity, as well as their careful attention to the norms of good participatory process, almost ensure a successful result.

Beatrice Briggs is the founding director of the International Institute for Facilitation and Change (IIFAC), a Mexico-based consulting group that specializes in participatory processes. The author of the manual Introduction to Consensus and many articles about group dynamics, Beatrice travels around the world, giving workshops and providing facilitation services in both English and Spanish. Home is Ecovillage Huehucoyotl, near Tepoztlán, Mexico, where she has lived since 1998. bbriggs@iifac.org; www.iifac.org.



Laird Schaub responds:

One of the predictably difficult aspects of group dynamics is Challenging Personalities—folks whose style and behavior are frequently disruptive, or at least commonly problematic. I'm not talking about people whose views are often not aligned with the majority (though that may be in play as well); I am focusing here on those whose manner and bearing are regularly grating on the group. It's a relatively common phenomenon.

While this can manifest in more flavors than Baskin-Robbins has ice cream, one of the most prevalent is the person with high energy and a forceful delivery. They are often perceived as upset, or on the verge of it, and don't seem to mind either the tension or the chaos that typically surrounds their contributions. Their comments are not always germane, yet they are invariably delivered with conviction and high amperage.

In consequence, the group is often faced with tough choices around how to work with their input, and there tends to be a weariness and knee-jerk irritation that follows this kind of person around like a cloud of miasmatic gas. Understandably, a considerable amount of resentment often builds up towards such a person, and their contributions are often marginalized (if they can't behave, then we shouldn't have to give their input as much weight). To be clear, the marginalization does not happen as a result of any explicit decision by the rest of the group; it occurs organically as everyone withdraws their support and good will in response to feeling ill-treated and disrespected. It may look like a conspiracy to the person being pushed to the side of the road, but that's rarely the case.

Dale (a pseudonym) was just such a person. I had worked with Dale's group multiple times and knew the community fairly well. I also was aware of the group's story about Dale. She was labeled “a problem,” and I was cautioned (regularly)

about the need to contain her behavior and not let Dale hijack the meeting.

All of this is prelude to the story of a meeting in Dale's community that I witnessed several years ago. During the prep for the meeting the facilitator fretted over how to handle a particular topic on the agenda. It had to do with how well another member (a single parent woman) was monitoring her kid's behavior in common space, a topic on which it was known that Dale was sitting on some critical feedback. The facilitator also knew that the parent was not ready to hear everyone's feedback and wanted to talk first with the group about the struggles she was going through in finding time to earn enough money and also be a hands-on parent. She was struggling.

I was coaching the facilitator (a man in this case) and he was shaky about how he'd handle Dale. To complicate matters even further, once the community meeting got underway Dale arrived late, missed the introduction of the key topic, and wasn't in a good mood. (Great start, huh?)

Sure enough, within minutes of Dale's appearance and her realization that the topic she wanted to speak to was on the table, she tried to launch into her upset (with all the subtlety of a Wagnerian opera). The facilitator took a deep breath and tried to explain to her in measured tones why the group wasn't going to tackle feedback at that meeting. Dale wasn't having any, and kept her bulldozer in gear. After a few more futile attempts at stopping Dale's gathering momentum, the facilitator turned to me with the expression of a drowning man and I stepped in.

Turning to Dale, I made sure I had eye contact, and then walked her through the sequence with a firm voice (louder than that used by the facilitator, but quieter than Dale's):

"Here's where we are. The parent is not ready for feedback at this meeting. We thought she would be, but she isn't. Since having that go well is a high priority, we're accommodating her wishes. At the same time, it's important that the feedback happen and we won't leave this topic until we've agreed on a time to reschedule the feedback. As we know that you have something to say on that, we're glad you're here and can tell us when will work for you. Meanwhile, the parent wants the community's attention for discussing what she's doing to find a better balance between earning a living and time with her kid. Will this work for you?"

One of the predictably difficult aspects of group dynamics is Challenging Personalities—those whose manner and bearing are regularly grating on the group.

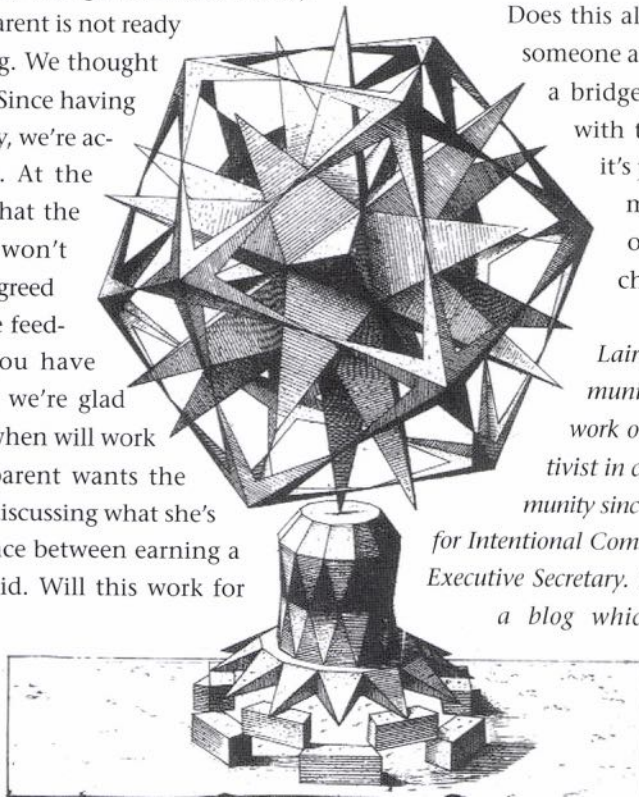
—LAIRD SCHAUB

After a moment's reflection, Dale said, "Yes," at which point I responded, "Good," and sat back down. I didn't step in again for the remainder of the meeting, and wasn't needed. Having been met energetically and acknowledged (without being chided or condescended to), Dale changed her behavior. For the rest of the meeting, her focus was good, she didn't speak off topic, and she left her bulldozer parked outside the room. In short, she behaved markedly better than you would have thought possible if the only thing you knew about Dale was the group's story about her.

It was an unusually good meeting, and the key moment was the exchange I had with Dale. Used to getting a lot of resistance to her contributions, Dale typically responded with either getting sullen or pushing harder. When she got something different from me—being heard and met—she responded in a way people weren't used to (and didn't think was possible): Dale got more flexible and listened better. Instead of focusing on Dale's bulldozing (which was absolutely no fun to be around and was potentially traumatizing for the parent), I focused on acknowledging Dale's needs and accepting her energy as not ill-intended.

Does this always work? No. Sometimes I don't hear someone accurately enough or otherwise fail to find a bridge that will connect the difficult person with the rest of the group. But if you believe it's possible and are looking for a bridge, you may be surprised how often you'll find one is there—and people can start exchanging ideas instead of salvos. ❁

Laird Schaub, a member of Sandhill Farm community in Missouri, has been doing consulting work on group process since 1987. A longtime activist in community networking, he has lived in community since 1974 and been involved with the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC) since 1986; he is currently its Executive Secretary. laird@ic.org; 660-883-5545. Laird authors a blog which can be read at communityandconsensus.blogspot.com.



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Shifting Our Views on Ecovillage Economics

When I found out that the theme for this issue of COMMUNITIES was scarcity and abundance, I thought it would be the

perfect time to write an article on ecovillage finance. Yet, when I mentioned this idea to some colleagues, they did not initially react with the enthusiasm I had expected. My mention of the idea of ecovillage finance along with scarcity and abundance caused minds to jump to voluntary poverty, which was not the direction I had been thinking of taking this article.

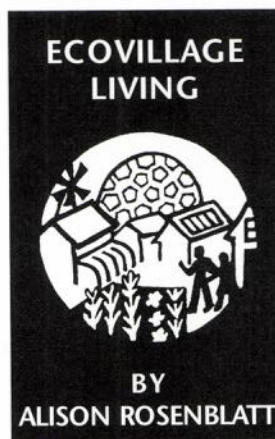
Why do the words ecovillage and finance in combination conjure up thoughts of poverty? The initial negative reactions to this topic strengthened my desire to write this article and ex-

plore the relationship many ecovillagers have with finance.

I've been intrigued by ecovillage finance and economics for quite a while.

I've recently been tossing around the idea of writing a book on ecovillage finance and, in doing so, I've started preliminarily researching the communities that I've lived in.

Most recently, I spent five months living and working at Los Angeles Eco-Village (LAEV). While there, I interviewed a number of Eco-Villagers, asking the question: "Financially, how has living at Los Angeles Eco-Village affected your lifestyle?" Most interviewees shared that living at LAEV has enabled them to pursue the work they are passionate about, yet still live comfortably. For some,



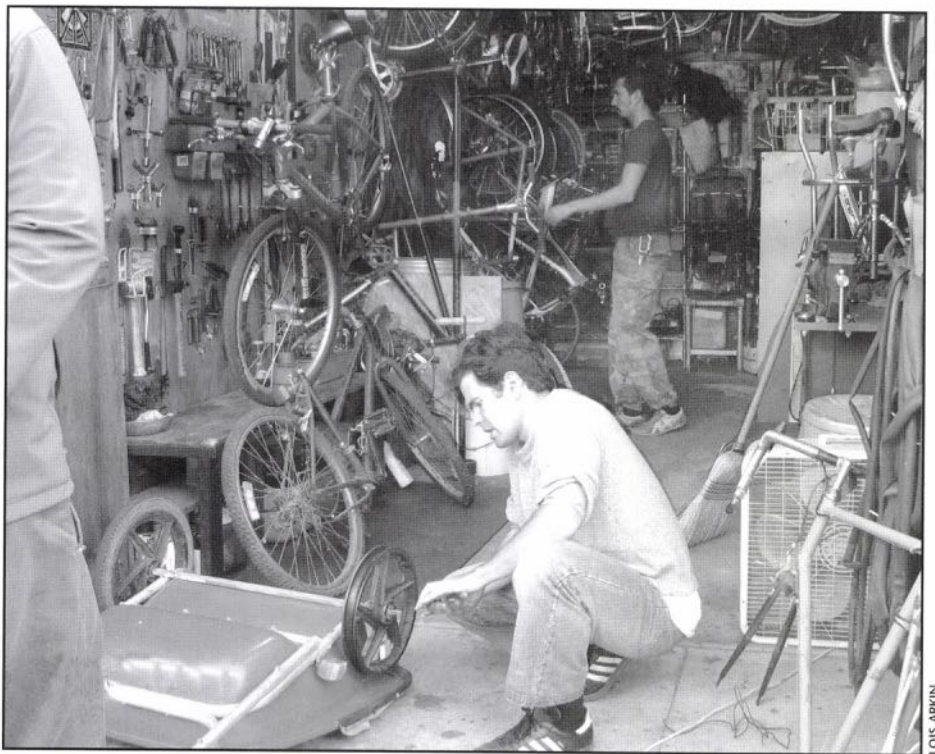
LOIS ARKIN



LOIS ARKIN

this meant working at a non-profit. For others, it meant having more time to pursue their music career, as they only had to work part-time jobs to cover their living expenses.

Now this is a bit surprising, after hearing the initial connection between ecovillage finance and voluntary poverty; but I can vouch for the truth of this comfortable lifestyle. When I lived at LAEV, I made a mere \$1200 a month, which, while above the poverty line (at \$10,787 in 2007), is only a little more than half



LOIS ARKIN

Creating Currency: L.A. Eco-Villagers find creative ways to use their LET (Local Economic Trade) credits: Left: Chocolatier Melba Thorn offers goodies for trade. Above: The LAEV bike repair hut fixes wagons too!

of the 2006 median income of \$26,036 (figures from the US Census Bureau). Yet, my life was in no way financially scarce. Granted, I did not have health insurance and relied on my parents for insurance for my car (which was in no way needed in L.A. if I hadn't been planning

on moving soon after). I was still able to cover rent, eat completely organic, eat out, go out for a drink with friends, and occasionally splurge on a massage. I was not living a life of poverty.

And yes, it is important to note that Los Angeles Eco-Village is in a relatively rare situation, having purchased its two buildings in the mid to late 1990s, subsequent to the Rodney King riots in 1992 and the Northridge Earthquake of 1994, when property values were exceptionally low. And it managed to finance these purchases with private loans made to its community revolving loan fund at relatively low interest rates, enabling the nonprofit developer, CRSP, to maintain significantly below-market rents.

And low rent is only one side of the story. What about the side where world changers don't make a lot of money? L.A. Eco-Villagers are able to live com-

Community Economics Embodied:

Far Left: L.A. Eco-Villager Aurisha Smolarski Waters gives violin lessons to neighborhood youth.

Left: L.A. Eco-Villagers Ron Milam and Ritu Goswamy volunteer at the Sunday food co-op distribution activity.



LOIS ARKIN

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Occidental is located in western Sonoma County, 20 minutes west of Santa Rosa

fortably because of their low rents, but what if they had had to purchase the buildings at current market values? The story would probably have a different ending.

When I lived as an intern at Lost Valley Educational Center (located in Dexter, Oregon), my financial story was very different. I made absolutely no money. I worked in exchange for room and board and had a bank account that was slowly depleted by the occasional addition of beer, cheese, and gas (to get myself to town or the nearby hot springs) into my life. However, while my life was a bit financially scarce, it was far more abundant than at times when I worked a traditional 9-to-5 job and had more financial resources. My life at Lost Valley was filled with amazing local organic food, a community of friends and family that were always around for impromptu dance parties, jumps in the creek, knitting by the fire, and walks in the lichen-filled forest. And this community was always ready to offer massages when I was stressed, herbal remedies when I was sick, and an ear to listen when I was having a rough time. Money could not have bought the life I had at Lost Valley.

Yet, while my life at Lost Valley was abundant in all ways not financial, I did still have bills to pay. Which brings me back to that question: how can we manifest financial abundance into the ecovillage world?

I think a part of this solution is transforming our views on money. I've had the interesting experience of growing up with an accountant as a father and somehow majoring in business in college, while being very active in the environmental movement and at times feeling very anti-business. Yet, the more I've delved into the environmental movement, the more I've realized how important it is to appreciate the benefits of understanding finance and business, and finding the balance where you

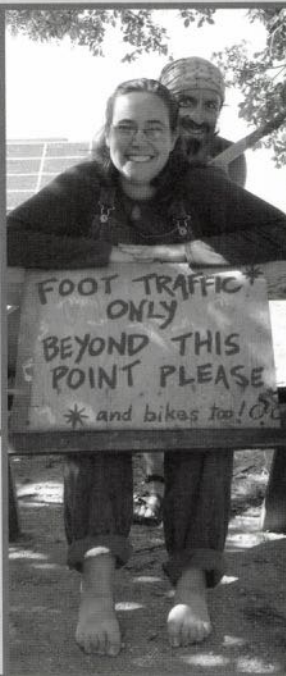
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MARCUS LORUSSO

Community members and friends perform at one of Lost Valley's frequent Open Mic nights.

are passionate about your work and compensated fairly for it.

I've recently had a lot of conversations about the idea of honoring ourselves for the work that we do. As activists, change-makers, and those striving for a life that does not fit into the more mainstream model, we often work for very little because we are so passionate about our work. And how amazing is that, to be able to be so passionate about your work that you don't care about the money? You're not sitting in an office counting the minutes until you get to go home; you are loving the work that you do.

But the downside is that often this love for the work that we do turns into a lack of care for ourselves. I've definitely worked 60-hour weeks. And while I loved my work, I was still overworking. I wasn't living a sustainable lifestyle. Sometimes in our passion to change the world, we overlook ourselves and the need to care for ourselves.

How are we working towards creating a sustainable world, if we ourselves are not living a sustainable lifestyle? This is

a question I've asked myself a lot over the past year and something I've been working on changing in my life. But I've also noticed it in a lot of my colleagues and especially my mentors.

One memorable conversation on this topic occurred when I was working on

setting up a LETSystem at L.A. Eco-Village. A LETSystem (Local Economic Trading System) is a type of local currency, a third-party computerized barter system. However, unlike in traditional barter, you do not have to offer something to the person you are trading with. Instead, you exchange "credits," which basically means commitments to offer something to the system as a whole.

One issue that comes up a lot in LET-Systems is people's fear of other people abusing the system. But, I learned while setting up this system, abuse isn't really a problem; you can view everyone's balance and transaction history and decide whether or not you want to trade with them. I was informed that one of the issues in LAEV's past LETSystem was that some people got significantly out of balance—consistently taking or giving more.

The problem of only taking is one we are used to hearing. Yet in the ecovillage movement, the problem of only giving is the one that I think needs to be addressed more.

I had a really interesting conversation with an Eco-Villager who had been part of LAEV's first LETSystem, which started



LOIS ARKIN

Closet Abundance: Clothes Swap party at L.A. Eco-Village.

in 1987 after LETS founder Michael Linton gave a talk in Los Angeles. The LAEV person, who gave too much, explained that many people in the ecovillage/communities movement need to honor themselves for the work they do and the energy they put out. We aren't used to taking, and we aren't always comfortable asking. Ecovillagers tend to be generalists, skilled in many areas, independent-minded. Some could use help in learning to ask for help—even in areas

we have some expertise in but not enough time. This also goes along with learning to better honor ourselves, our work, and the energy we put out.

When teaching L.A. Eco-Villagers about the LETSsystem, I encouraged them to check people's balances before trading with them. If they noticed that someone had a high credit balance (meaning they offered their services a lot, but had not received as much as they offered), they should not trade with them. Instead,


they should encourage them to take something for themselves. To say, "I really want you to teach me how to garden, but I'm not comfortable trading with you until I see that you are honoring your work and taking something for yourself. Why don't you get a massage from so and so or your bike repaired from...?" It is important that we strive for balance in our lives, just as we do in our permaculture approaches to developing communities, working with the principles of reciprocity and energy flows.

Many ecovillages and intentional communities are already practicing some form of a local currency. A LETSsystem is one more possibility. Wherever a community seems to have a scarcity value, creating a local currency or improving on an existing local currency can create more abundance.

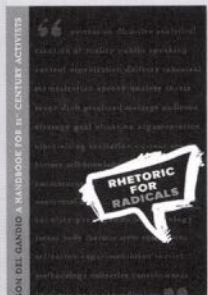
But what else can we do? How can we switch our mindset about ecovillage finance and economics? How can we start creating more financial abundance in the ecovillage world? How can we start honoring ourselves and stop overworking? How can we live the sustainable lifestyles we teach?

I hope we can continue to ponder these questions. Please write to me with your thoughts on this subject, and I will be sharing your responses in future columns and/or that book I'm thinking about writing. ✨

Alison Rosenblatt is currently living in Vancouver, British Columbia, where she is pursuing her Masters at the University of British Columbia. She is studying education for environmental and social change, with a focus on the education of alternative economics. She is the NextGEN (the Next Generation of the Global Ecovillage Network) representative to the Global Ecovillage Network board, as well as the co-secretary of the Ecovillage Network of the Americas. She is co-editor of this Ecovillage Living column. You can reach her at alison@ecovillage.org.

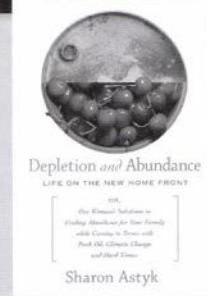


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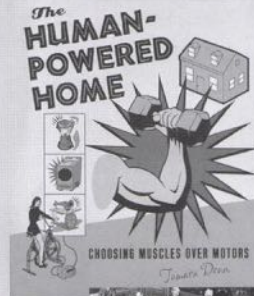
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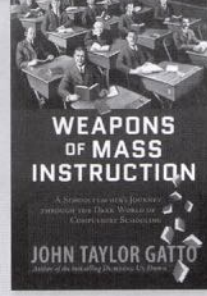
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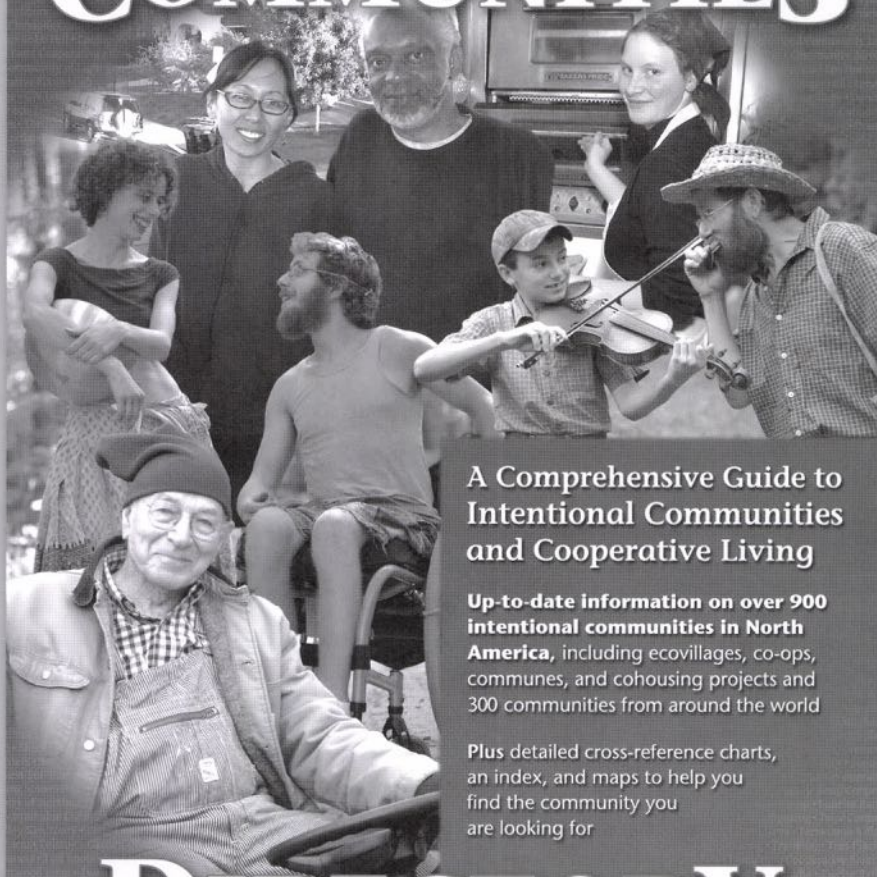
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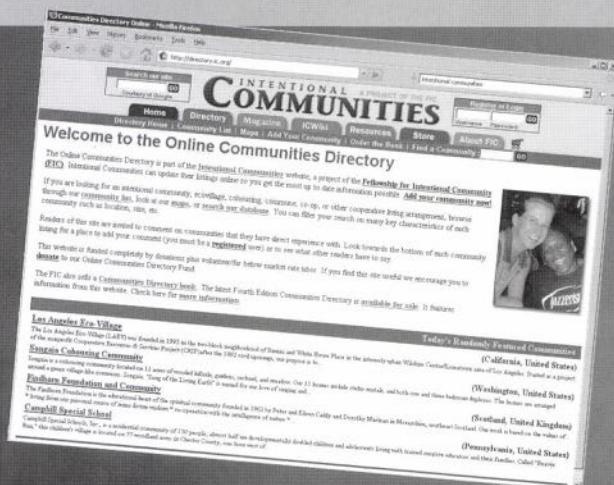
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ALL PHOTOS: JOSHUA CANTER

All We Have

Is

all we have is all we need • all we have is all we need • all we have is all we need • all we have is all we need • all we have is all we need • all we have is all we need • all we have is all we need • all we have is all we need • all we have is all we need • all we have is all we need

By Joshua Canter

I clearly remember, five years ago, traveling through my home state of California and into the mountains of southern Oregon. Our core group of 12, caravanning in three cars, looked at various properties where we thought we might settle and start our community. One place after another left us uninspired and drastically surprised at the prices of properties that did not fill even a quarter of the specifics that we were looking for in a piece of land.

Did our community want to start with a 30-year mortgage? Already our projected budget for start-up had almost doubled from what we initially thought it was going to cost. Suddenly, our dream of a new, liberated, and simple life seemed more like a mirage; instead, we'd be digging ourselves into a deep, complicated hole. How were we going to do this?

A few months later, after tips from some friends, I took a spontaneous journey to Costa Rica to explore the country and to continue the search for our new home. During the two-month period, I looked at over 100 pieces of property up and down the country. Property was inexpensive compared to where we were looking before, and the land was abundant in resources beyond what I could find anywhere on the West Coast, with rivers, waterfalls, tropical fruit trees, rich soil, springs, wildlife, clean air...and the list went on. Costa Rica, the "Rich Coast," was named by the Spanish. Although they found no gold when they arrived, they considered it rich simply for its natural beauty.

On New Year's Day, 2004, after purchasing the property, we settled on our land and True Nature began. True Nature is located in the rural farming village of La Florida. For generations, the Costa Rican native people ("Ticos") have led simple, sustainable, and rich lives, with almost nothing to show for it. Most of them grew up subsistence farmers, working with the land they had, using it to provide the necessities for the

The land was abundant in resources beyond what I could find anywhere on the West Coast, with rivers, waterfalls, tropical fruit trees, rich soil, springs, wildlife, clean air... and the list went on. Costa Rica, the "Rich Coast."



all we have is all we need • all we have is all we need • all we have is all we need • all we have is all we need • all we have is all we need • all we have is all we need • all we have is all we need • all we have is all we need • all we have is all we need • all we have is all we need

It takes hard work to live in a way that is so simple and truly rich.

ated lively discussions at our council meetings and around the dinner table.

As time went on in the village and in the creation of our own community, I saw more and more clearly that the concepts of wealth, scarcity, and abundance are reflections of our cultural mentality. I watched my Costa Rican neighbors, on pieces of land on either side of me, wake up at dawn, work in the fields until sunset, come home to their families and their simple little homes, and do it again the next day. I would visit them often in the evenings and on the weekends and be amazed at how happy these people's lives were. Children would run from house to house in the village; the men would sit on their decks and watch the sunset after a long day's work; the women would visit each other often. All they had was all they needed, and they were genuinely happy. In Costa Rica, the mantra of the country is "Pura Vida" (pronounced

pooda veeda), which means "pure life." Wherever you go in the country, people say proudly, "Pura Vida." The pure life I witnessed in the village of La Florida was a reflection that continues to guide our community today.

In the US, I had grown up in an upper class family in Los Angeles. Richness was seen not through intact natural resources or quality of life, but through the vacations we took, the cars we drove, and the clothes we wore. America today, more than ever, is looking at the question of "What is enough?"

Gradually, we at True Nature began to want more and more. Our original vision had never been to live as the Ticos do; and some of us, more than others, were now eager to begin to grow the vision that we came with. Struggles arose within the group as some proposed that we begin to obtain additional resources to help us move forward. After a year and a half, one community member purchased the first vehicle. We followed by deciding to ship an overseas crate from the United States, containing tools and materials we could not obtain within the country.

Around the same time that we bought our vehicle, a few other foreigners bought property in the surrounding villages

to start their own community projects. They came with their own mission and vision. It was to "build, and build fast." Just as many Americans have done in the country, they came with all of their wealth from the States and created what they wanted, at the pace that many people create in the States. As this began to



all we have is all we need



happen around us, it affected our community and affected the village. As the new people around La Florida brought their own form of wealth, everyone, including the Ticos and ourselves, began to watch and feel the result of this new form of abundance.

Subtly we began to desire more. We watched the new people get new cars, washing machines, chainsaws, and hot water. And naturally, we wanted these things. We watched people build structures within months, and already begin to host groups of people, a vision we had had years before; and we wanted these things. And most of all, we were struck by the effect this all had on the simple native people of the "rich coast"; they wanted these things.

The next years became a dynamic time of change, growth, and learning at True Nature. The key to our growth was acceptance: acceptance of all the many ways and forms in which life provides us gifts.

In response to this dynamic new phase in the village and in our group, two of the founding partners of True Nature began the CREER Service Organization. The mission of the organization is to provide a bridge of education, awareness, and a global perspective from the world to the villagers of La Florida, helping to support the native culture through changing times.

We began to accept more and more the delicate balance we were finding in living in the village of La Florida and at True Nature. We understood that change was inevitable and we acknowledged also our roots, values, and each other's diverse upbringings.

We embraced the vehicle which took us to town each week, and we also embraced the machete which cut down coconuts so efficiently. We shared gratitude for the hot water which cleaned our dirty bodies, and also marveled in the cool waters of the waterfall on our land. We used the telephone and the dial-up internet to communicate with our families and spread the word of our community and sprouting education

Clockwise from top left: A yoga moment; Luna teaches our Costa Rican neighbor Tony how to play guitar; Marco holds a mamachino, one of the exotic fruits found on the land of True Nature; Felipe displays a dried banana harvest with a view of the valley behind him; the sacred circle during the "Creating Community" course held at True Nature.

center, and we visited our new adopted Costa Rican family nightly. We learned that, truly, all we have is all we need.

Many of the experiences of the past four years have melded into who I am today, and also how I see scarcity and wealth within myself, my community, and the world. After witnessing such drastic differences between the lifestyle I grew up in and the lifestyle I adopted in the early years at True Nature, I feel that I have a broad perspective in this area. Deep within myself, I know that if I need to, I can live with very little and appreciate the richness of life. If the resources of our apparent "abundant" American culture run out, I will be one of the minorities of people who will be okay, accepting "all I have is all I need." I also understand that life is not easy, and it takes hard work to live in a way that is so simple and truly rich. I have a deep gratitude and appreciation for the ability to share in the material abundance I grew up with and that I have today in its various forms. I cherish the plethora of experiences, education, and resources I have, that the Ticos in the village of La Florida may never have.

(continued on p. 73)

Ecobarrios: A Chilanga's Dream

By Noelle Romero

Chilango is the name given to someone who was born in Mexico City. In fact, it is said that the ancient Mayas used to call the Aztecs Chilangos, which means “fish in dirty water.” I was born in Mexico City and therefore, I am a Chilanga.

Before the Dream

To live in this huge and challenging city is to live a life of contrasts—contrasts in people's genetic origins, socio-economic extracts, religious beliefs and lifestyles, and even sensory contrasts, such as the intermixed scents of diesel fumes and tacos and the sounds of salsa music against the roaring of car engines. Twenty million people living in the same geography is not an easy thing to survive. But I'm here, it is my city, and I love it!

It is said that human beings are adaptable to any condition, and to some degree this is true, but there are things I can never adapt to, such as pollution and the destruction of nature. Unfortunately, these issues are evident in my city, and most people have adapted to them without questioning. Among all the fuss and buzz of this city, there are multiple traces of human ignorance and unawareness. Solid residues pile up in tons on a daily basis. Exhaust fumes from hundreds of thousands of cars create a difficult-to-breathe atmosphere. And the urban cloud of thousands of human settlements spreads, invades and impacts our forests, and pollutes our rivers.

Living in a country where poverty prevails, people in general get adapted to this reality as well. I could never accept it and never will.

I come from a “good cradle,” as it is said here to refer to people who are born in a comfortable economic situation. I

had good education that went all the way to obtaining a master's degree in a foreign country.

In a developing country, those who were born poor will generally remain poor. And it is all because we have learned the wrong things. Mainly, we have acquired a wrong concept of abundance that has prevailed for thousands of years; while this concept prevails, so will poverty.

Poverty and wealth have been inherited in Mexico ever since the Spaniards arrived to colonize our country. The indigenous people paired with the Spaniards, creating the mestizo race. In general, the mestizos belong to the lower economic stratus and the whites belong to the stratus of the affluent. Ever since childhood, I have been moved at the sight of children and elders begging in the streets, and I feel a moral debt to the dispossessed. I have always prayed for an opportunity to work in bringing a little more justice to those who lack the basic goods to live a dignified life.

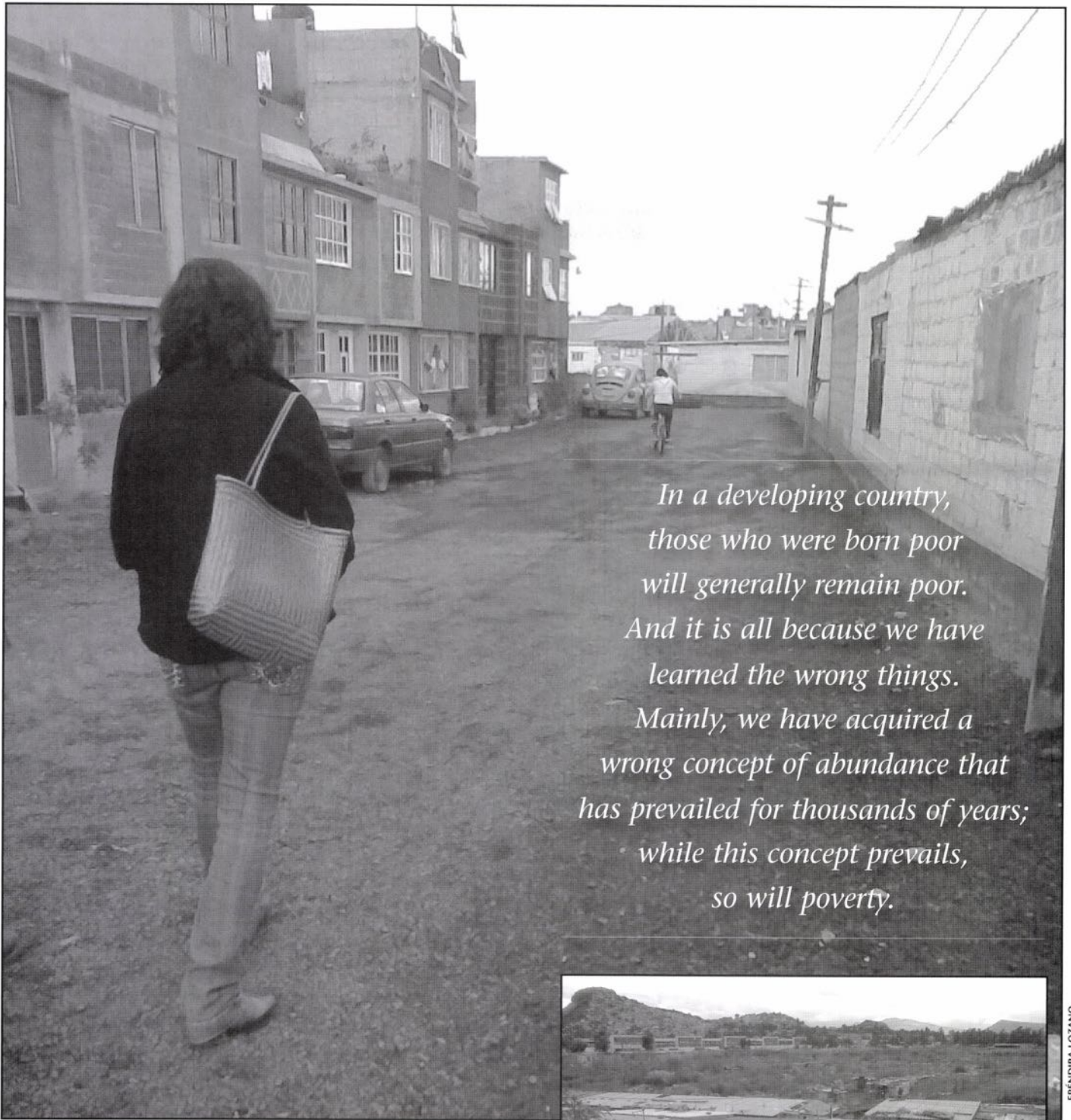
My prayers were heard. I was invited to participate in the Ecobarrios Project. Eco-barrio could be translated as an eco-neighborhood, and logically we would understand from this word a group of homes that are ecological. But Ecobarrios refers to much more than that, since Ecobarrios are a new way of living.

So let us go a little deeper into the subject of Ecobarrios... During the '70s, communities of young people experimented with an alternative way of life. This way of life followed a new paradigm, one of living in harmony within the community and with nature. This new paradigm was the seed of the thousands of ecovillages that nowadays exist all around the world.

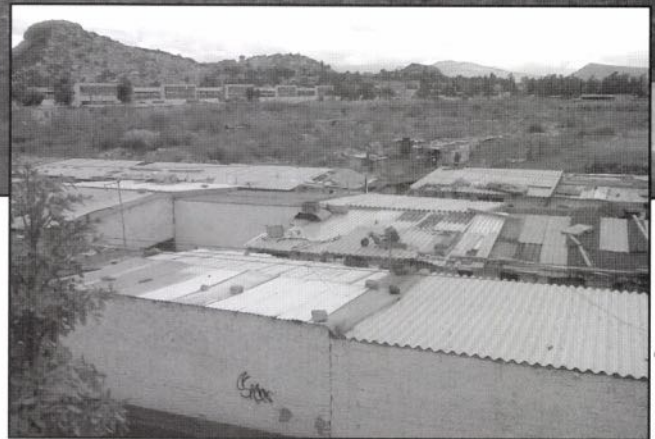
Ecovillages are sustainable human settlements that pose alternatives where all the important aspects of life, including



An example of the extreme poverty in the human settlements near the Magdalena River.



*In a developing country,
those who were born poor
will generally remain poor.
And it is all because we have
learned the wrong things.
Mainly, we have acquired a
wrong concept of abundance that
has prevailed for thousands of years;
while this concept prevails,
so will poverty.*



Ecobarrios' implementation of ecotechnologies: Top: The author walks down the alley that divides the impoverished encampment at Frente Pancho Villa on the right from the new low-income housing unit Guelatao 222 in Iztapalapa on the left. The landscaping has not yet begun. Inset: The original Frente Pancho Villa encampment.

environmental, economic, social, human, and cultural aspects, are considered. All of these are integrated in harmony and respect with the natural surroundings, promoting healthy and enduring systems of development for the indefinite future. Ecovillages of this type tend to exist in non-urban areas, within the natural geography.

An Ecobarrio is defined as a group of people or community who share a long-term vision of becoming organized in a manner that will improve their quality of life and nurture human well-being in harmony with the environment. An



RAUL BARRAJAS

Known as the last river alive in Mexico City, the Magdalena River is crystal clear at its affluent, 22 kilometers upstream, and of excellent drinking quality. However, as it flows down its path through residential sectors of the city, the Magdalena has become the recipient of domestic drainages. At the last point before its connection to the piping system, the Magdalena River has already become a sewer.

range from the peri-urban areas near conservation grounds in the mountains surrounding the Valley of Mexico City, to the totally urban neighborhoods of Iztapalapa, located in the east section of the city. Each of these settings poses specific challenges for the implementation of the project.

The challenge of the peri-urban settings is the encroachment of the urban area onto conservation grounds. These human settlements are in the majority of cases examples of non-permitted housing, and therefore lack public services such as drainage, drinking water, solid residue recollection, and electricity. This situation has great impact on the environment, and one good example is the discharge of domestic drainages and solid residues into the gullies and water bodies such as rivers and lakes.

High in the mountains southeast of Mexico City births one of the most important rivers in the valley. Known as the last river alive in Mexico City, the Magdalena River is crystal clear at its affluent, 22 kilometers upstream, and of excellent drinking quality. However, as it flows down its path through five residential sectors of the city, the Magdalena River has become the recipient of domestic drainages, carrying along all kinds of solid residues. At the last point before its connection to the piping system, the Magdalena River has already become a sewer.

Why people in our city and country would consider our water bodies as black-water carriers is a question that has always struck me. Why would people who have settled at the outskirts of the river consider something as precious and sacred as water as a container and carrier of all sorts of solid

Ecobarrio follows the rural ecovillage principles, but in urban scenarios.

The Ecobarrios system has been successfully implemented in many countries all around the world. One good example is Bogotá, capitol of Colombia.

What stimulated the creation of the Ecobarrios in Bogotá was the intent to apply the utopian model of an ecovillage to this city, attempting to answer the needs of its citizens, who were trying to transform their city into something beautiful, healthy, and environmentally benign.

Citizen participation is an essential aspect of an Ecobarrio. The community is the soul of an Ecobarrio and it is the community that will make it happen.

The Ecobarrios project also includes in its proposal the work and counseling of an interdisciplinary team of teachers and academics, who in conjunction with the people of the community work on all the different stages of the design and implementation of the Ecobarrios methodology.

Ecobarrios offer an alternative for sustainable living and can be applied in a variety of urban settings. These settings could



RAÚL BARAJAS

residues? And why do people accept the fact that outside their doorstep, instead of a beautiful crystal river, passes by a pestilent flow of black water and trash?

The issue of the encroachment of human settlements on the natural areas of Mexico City is complex. The inhabitants of these settlements are generally immigrants from other rural areas of the country and have been forced to leave their original places of residence because of the lack of resources to grow their crops. So they emigrate to the city hoping to find more op-



NURIA MURINO



RAÚL BARAJAS

portunities for their survival. They settle on the natural areas surrounding Mexico City where they buy a piece of land on a non-permitted basis, because land on green areas is not to be sold. They build their houses with whatever materials they can afford and sometimes these materials are as rudimentary as cardboard and tin.

I was once observing two ladies who were neighbors and lived on the side of the river. They were chatting happily from door to door, while the pestilential river was flowing right in front of them. I wondered how it was possible to be unaffected by this sight and smell. One of the answers to this question may be that those who are outcast from public attention, culture, and education live such a low quality of life that apathy and depression come along.

Outcast communities such as these lack many things, but mainly they lack information on how to improve their quality of life and that there are simple, down-to-earth solutions to these problems. People in these communities deserve this information in order to live a more dignified life. We owe it to them and we owe it to the Planet!

The many faces of Rio Magdalena: Clockwise on both pages, from top left: The Magdalena River in its natural, unspoiled form near its source; life goes on, even when sewage runs through town; unauthorized hookups to water supply in settlements near the river; runaway sewage discharge into the river.



As part of the Master Plan for the rescue of the Magdalena River, we proposed the implementation of Ecobarrios in the human settlements on the peripheral area of the southeastern sector of the city, above the mountains on what is known as the Ecological Park Los Dinamos.

In this kind of scenario, Ecobarrios has presented a proposal to be implemented in a major project with the Mexico City government. This project, named “Salvemos al Río,” which translates as “Let’s Save the River,” is oriented to the rescuing of the Magdalena River. All involved are members of the Grupo Promotor (Promotion Group) composed of different members of the local government of Mexico City, academics, and citizen representatives.

As part of the Master Plan for the rescue of the Magdalena River, we proposed the implementation of Ecobarrios in the human settlements on the peripheral area of the southeastern sector of the city. This area is up above the mountains on what is known as the Ecological Park Los Dinamos.

A second part of the Ecobarrios project will be implemented on the peri-urban settings in the area known as Santa Rosa Xochiac, located in the high grounds on one of the southwestern mountains in the Valley of Mexico City. There is a polygon of land of about 30 hectares, where neighbors in the community have formed an NGO named Vecinos Asociados por un Futuro Verde (Neighbors Associated for a Green Future). Since these human settlements are found on conservation grounds, their housing situation is non-permitted and therefore

Acting locally to save the river:

Above: Martha Delgado, Secretaria del Medio Ambiente (Mexico City Government) and the Grupo Promotor.

Right: “Salvemos al Río”: Grupo Promotor with Secretaria del Medio Ambiente Martha Delgado at a town hall meeting.



they are particularly interested in becoming legal through becoming sustainable.

For all instances of human settlements on conservation grounds, we are proposing a clause in housing legislation where all homes claiming a “grandfathered” right to remain on the area can do so if and only if they become sustainable. The government is giving serious consideration to this proposal, which indeed is in process.

As part of the first phase of the Ecobarrios in Santa Rosa Xochiac, we are lobbying for the building of a prototype of an ecological house that will be designed following permaculture and sustainability principles. Besides the permacultural design of the house, there will be ecotechnologies implemented as well as domestic organic agriculture. This house will educate the local community on a new paradigm of life which will be greatly enhanced in quality. In the meantime, we will be giving workshops on environmental education to the local community. From these workshops we want tangible results such as a solid residue center, compost plants, domestic organic

gardens, a co-op of biodegradable products, and an arts and crafts workshop with recycled material. These workshops are already scheduled for the second semester of this year.

There are other scenarios in more urban settings where we are also working on implementing Ecobarrios. We have been invited as counselors on a housing program in Iztapalapa, east of Mexico City. The

(continued on p. 72)

Nashira Eco-Village

By Angela Dolmetsch

On a three-acre property where lemon, orange, tangerine, plantain, and nonie trees are in full production, 88 low-income women and their families have been working the land during the last four years. They have built their own vegetable beds and compost heaps, and are in the process of harvesting worms for organic feeding of poultry and fish. Through a government program, they have been provided with units to rear



chicken, ducks, quail, poultry, and guinea pigs, which they use as a source of protein or barter with other neighbors. Four African sheep are in charge of cutting the grass. The consolidated group is now building the first 41 housing units, distributed in groups of eight houses. The housing project is using ecological materials including empty plastic water bottles filled with earth and put together with mud. The beneficiaries are urban residents of cities or villages in the Department of El Valle del Cauca, who have come to the city running away from the war, and who live in dismal conditions within the poverty belt of Cali and Palmira.

The Nashira project goes beyond offering just a house. It seeks to provide a better quality of life, offering a secure and nutritious supply of food within the compound, an environmentally friendly atmosphere, and a source of income through the development of workshops where women can manufacture their own products. Thanks to the help of "Change the World" from Norway, a solar restaurant is

being built where the women from Nashira hope to provide healthy and tasty food not only for the Nashira dwellers but also as a tourist attraction for visitors. The first Saturday of each month the Nashira Fair takes place, where the different products are sold to visitors from the neighboring towns of Cali and Palmira. Nashira is trying to develop its own currency, which is used as an exchange model in the Nashira Fair. It is impor-

tant at this stage that the women from Nashira will progress and have access to international markets not only to sell their products but also to promote the organic food produced in the compound and the unique development model which this project entails.

In Colombia, 32 percent of households are headed by women and depend on their work as the main source of income. A startling 72.5 percent of homes with women as head of household are below the poverty line. The Association of Women Who Are Head of Household (Asociacion Mujeres Cabeza de Familia, www.awhf.org.co) is the main developer of Nashira. ❁

Angela Dolmetsch, PhD is the director and mentor of the Nashira project. She was born in Cali, Colombia. She has dedicated her life to championing the cause of women, especially those women who find themselves in a disadvantaged condition due to poverty, discrimination, and abandonment.



Abundance and Scarcity in the Goodenough Community

By Kirsten Rohde

Our community's land near the Hood Canal in Washington State is called Sahale. Out at Sahale, when it rains, it pours. The metal roofs are pounded by rain that comes straight down from the low clouds. When the sun comes out, it is brighter and hotter than in Seattle. The sky is crystal clear or perhaps dotted with white puffy clouds. When the trees grow here, they grow really tall, and wherever blackberry vines get started, there is no end to them. We can grow fruit about which city-dwellers say, "Really? You can't grow that here."

We found this abundant land in 2001 and created our learning and retreat center, a budding ecovillage on 70 acres. Sahale is the Chinook word for "heaven on earth" and it has felt like that for us.

Yet we have also found ourselves tempted by perceptions of scarcity. At the same time that we acquired this land, we also began developing an urban housing cooperative for 19 individuals, families, and couples. This project included a community center and café for us and for the broader neighborhood and community of Seattle. Sahale has succeeded, while the in-town development failed.

We paid all accounts to outside vendors, leaving a loss of about \$500,000 to members in loans and deposits on their shares in the cooperative. Even more than the loss of money, we grieved the loss of the dream of our community in service through this center. Some members left, and we lost our way for awhile. At the same time, many of us were working to develop the buildings and rejuvenate the land out at Sahale. We

fell in love with her wonderful energy. Sahale sustained us through the difficult times of healing from our loss of an in-town center for our community-building work. Now, when we talk together we realize we still hold our dream dear to us, and plans are beginning for another way to create an "in-town" living and community center.



Even more than the loss of our money, we grieved the loss of our dream.

This is a picture of an experience of abundance and scarcity, woven together—loss and gain. In Richard's words, "Our community believes in the power of learning together. In fact, as we engaged the development of these two properties, we stated that our first goal was learning about facilities development. In retrospect during our evaluation we realized that we had actually lost learning as our first priority and had been caught up in an 'edifice complex'—caring more about building external facilities than about developing our inner facilities and abilities. Thus, one aspect of our learning is that our experience of scarcity and abundance starts inside of us."

Money and financial matters have been another way to learn about abundance versus scarcity. Some of us have played a role in the community for many years, helping educate about money and the energy and power we give it. A stance of scarcity attracts images and experiences of scarcity; likewise for abundance. For example, I've observed that if I think about the money I put into our facilities development as primarily money lost, never to be recovered, I begin to tighten and become resentful. I see it become my experience everywhere. I live a life of tightness and

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ALL PHOTOS: THE GOODENOUGH COMMUNITY

fear around money and that affects my energy. If instead I think of how I am joining with others to invest in our dreams, I begin to feel gratitude for my friends and for Sahale and all she offers. With the awareness of many opportunities to give and receive, I see that I am living in a life of abundance. So observing how I think about money has helped me learn about how energetic, optimistic, and generous I can be with all things in life.

Partners Pam and Elizabeth recall how it was for them to have loaned money to the community from their home equity and then realize that the loan could not be repaid in the near future. Elizabeth says, “Having faith in my community has been tested through the loan process. I have been criticized and judged, even by one of my own kids. It has caused me to re-examine my values and my choices. I can still say, however, that I would have made the same choice, to invest in a better life for me and my community, and for those that

join us. I have trusted that we as a community would make good on all of the loans.”

Many members have felt similarly that money can be a tool for learning. Our community members decided to remain constant in relationship and hold financial losses in common. We are working together in fundraising, educational programs, and new projects to regain and pay back each person who put money into the cooperative project. This has been a powerful statement to us and others about our commitment to each other and about our choice to study abundance rather than scarcity. We decided to invest in what is good about community rather than let disappointment set in. It is important to us to proceed into our future motivated by wanting to see all members paid off—we will have accomplished something powerful through this commitment.

Another area of study on scarcity and abundance is in the area of relationships. We work with the concept that there is plenty of love for everyone; it never runs out unless we think it has. So when a loving relationship becomes known in our community, we may notice reactions such as, “That’s wrong. She’s married.” Or, “How come she loves him and not me?” And so on. Another response, which sometimes takes learning, is to enjoy the energy of two people in love and notice that this love, if we welcome it, spreads to everyone. Here are Bruce’s thoughts: “The meaning of the word friendship has greatly changed for me through opening my heart and mind



Clockwise from top left: A truckload full of organic heirloom apples; the cedars that surround the sacred circle of Sahale’s Cedar Grove are estimated at almost 300 years old; teaching appreciation at Sahale Learning Center’s annual summer camps; blackberries.



that ran through the meadows, taking with it tent flooring and bridges, and rearranging the landscape quite dramatically. Grateful as we were for not suffering the damage to homes and loss of property that others experienced, we also looked around and knew that we had a major clean-up and repair job ahead of us.

Jim, who has helped build and repair many of the structures at Sahale, describes his feelings at that moment: "The difference between abundance and scarcity depends on my world view—is the glass half empty or half full? I looked at our swept-away tent flooring as a challenge we could meet, not a disaster. This was an illustration of the amazing power of the forces of nature, not a 'woe is me' because I will now be spending the spring rebuilding the structure."

"From experiences like this, I, and we, continue to learn about a relationship between humility and abundance."

We put out the call for help on New Year's weekend. What an outpouring of support we found! Forty people showed up with equipment, off-road vehicles, winches, strength, and lots of energy and skills for the work. Huge logs were dragged out, lumber recovered, many, many rocks gathered and put back into the stream beds, abundant meals were provided, many small and large repairs were done, and so much more—all in the middle of an overabundance of mud.

Richard says, "From experiences like this, I, and we, continue to learn about a relationship between humility and abundance. In our studies of economy we learned that an economy is really started when people borrow from one another. Money is actually created in this act that can be used elsewhere! It takes some amount of humility to state our need and to put ourselves in the debt of another by asking to borrow of their time, energy, and money. And this can lead to the abundance of more community friendship."

Pam and Elizabeth relate some of their story: "We've also worked, as our community has, to not live in a poverty script. We've learned

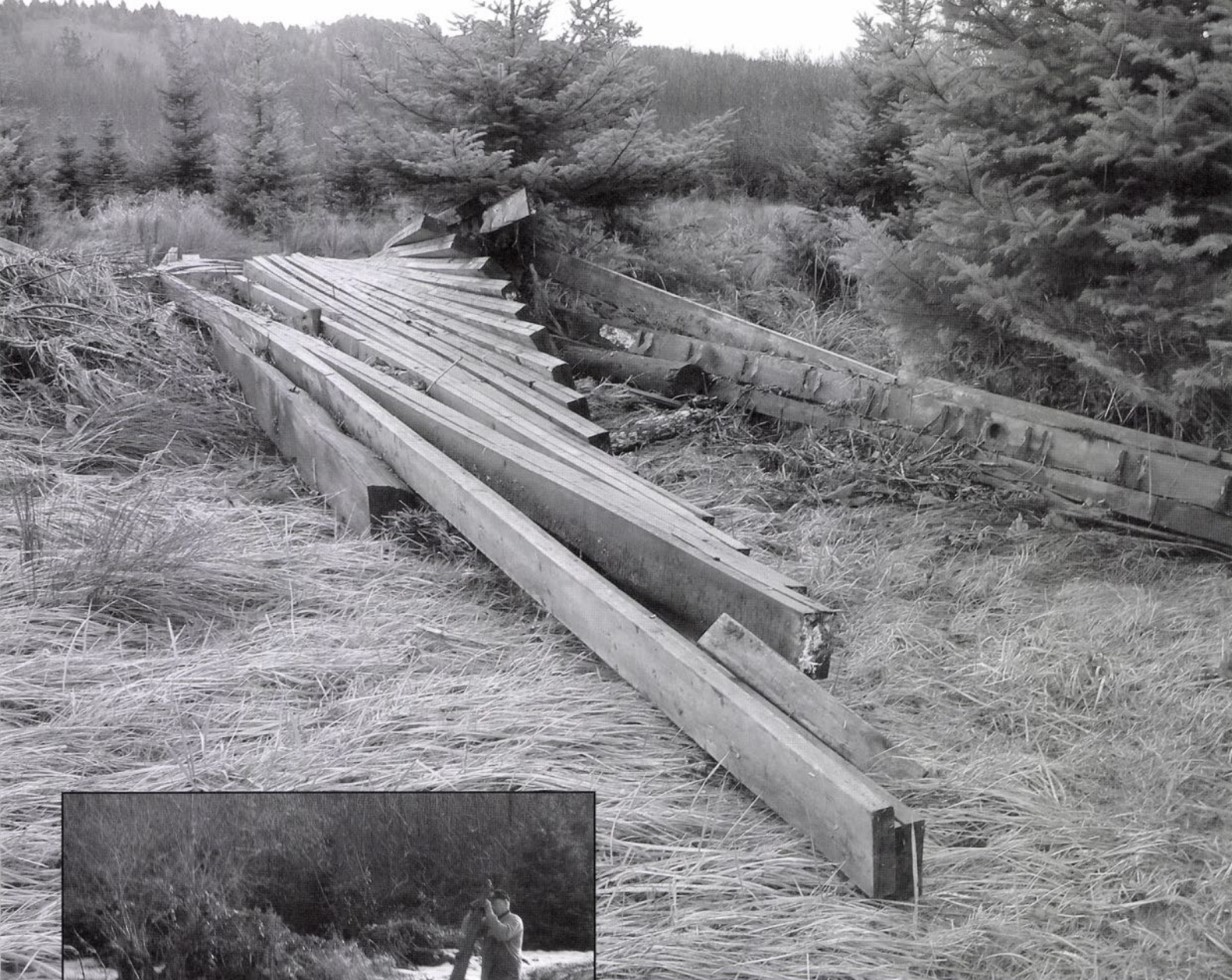
that investing in Sahale has been very good for us, be it investing time or money. For example, when we 'adopted' a room at Sahale (most members live and stay in both Seattle

to loving relationship with more close people in my life. I've learned that I have both human responses of scarcity and jealousy as well as those of love and abundance. Through learning to stay steady in my own personal development and grounded with others who have wisdom about abundance in friendship, I have found and experienced a larger framework and a deeper sense of belonging in this life that includes true friendships filled with love, respect, and appreciation."

So it is also with time and physical energy, yet another way to understand this theme. To manage all that is needed for a 70-acre retreat and food-producing land, plus all that is offered by our community through programs and services, takes many person hours. Many of us also hold full-time jobs. There is the temptation to give in to the belief that we have too little time and too few people. We can feel drained and lacking in hope and energy. On the other side, we have learned many times how much we can accomplish working together on projects. By making it fun and full of learning, we invite friends to join us and end up with a feeling of fullness and satisfaction.

One example occurred after our area was hit by a massive flood last winter. The southern tip of the Kitsap Peninsula, where Sahale is located, was cut off completely for several days due to washed-out bridges. This "700-year" flood caused major damage throughout the Pacific Northwest. Fortunately, all of our buildings at Sahale survived, but we were left with the aftermath of a raging river

Forty people showed up with equipment, off-road vehicles, winches, strength, and lots of energy and skills for the work. Huge logs were dragged out, lumber recovered, many, many rocks gathered and put back into the stream beds, abundant meals were provided, and so much more—all in the middle of an overabundance of mud.



Reminders of the power of Nature: From top left: The refurbished dancefloor prepped and ready for a special event; the post-flood dancefloor stacked like toothpicks by the flooding river, revealing the power of Nature; putting it back together... volunteer Tom James, ankle deep in mud and ice.

and Sahale), it changed the Sahale experience for us. We had a place to land! We then learned that we have a hard time not being creative. Pretty soon we had a name and theme for the room ('Pond Room'—out of Pam's love and creativity for the pond at Sahale). We found ourselves decorating the room in that theme—animal replicas and stickers, painting cattails on the dresser, laying a green carpet and bamboo floor covering, collecting fish and birdhouses (and even building decorative little birdhouses which we shared with others for their rooms). We were given a 'bear table' by our friends for our anniversary.

"We have been member sponsors of our community's New Year's celebration for a long time, but more formally since

we've had Sahale. We have put our energy and creativity into our community's December True Holidays celebration and into service for our community in many ways. We've also channeled creative energy into our lives at home and into creating a renewed commitment and relationship.

"Through these years, we've been tested and challenged. Our relationship with each other and our community is still strong and creative. We need our community's culture and we've learned they need us too."

Now our community members are looking at the world situation and we realize that we are headed for times that will be seen by most as times of scarcity. In actuality, many in the world have been living in such conditions for years, but now countries such as the US will be undergoing great changes. A fear of scarcity can result in denial and refusal to recognize



Left: A thoughtful moment of support at Sahale Summer Camp with volunteer camp counselor Doug DeMers and camper Arianna Zebold. Above: Goodenough resident Elizabeth's favorite job at Sahale!

the situation. A sense of abundance can lead to more creativity and more opportunities as needs change. Our community wants to respond and prepare, not just for our own sustainability but as support and resource to others.

Our plans include expanding the number of full-time residents at Sahale and researching and planning for alternative energy technology, since we realize that our reliance on out-

"I learn the difference between perceived scarcity that is simply my difficulty in receiving, and scarcity that is real and worthy of learning from."

side energy sources will most likely need to change. We recognize the growing need to be self-reliant regarding energy, supplies, and food production. We have already had workshops with expert consultants and contributions of work time in creating and implementing permaculture designs for the property. This year we have focused on maximizing our

food production capacity. Sahale functions as a training and educational center as well as a place for other groups to hold their own retreats and workshops. We have attracted a committed group of enthusiastic supporters of Sahale over seven years. Our intention is to both create a sustainable village for our membership and those who join us, and to continue to

utilize our demonstration and learning center to educate and encourage others to prepare for the certain dramatic changes that will be occurring in our global system: economy, energy, climate, social justice. While the future can bring a sense of scarcity (others in the world already know this), we believe that communities of all kinds can help us all feel the abundance of working together to weather great changes in our lives.

Norm has this to say: "What touches me is the abundance of support among us to collaborate in learning to bring more compassion into our lives and the world—even as we notice the abundance of resistance to doing so, within and outside of us. I also learn the difference between perceived scarcity that is simply my difficulty in receiving, and scarcity that is real and worthy of learning from. Then I strive to grow a greater abundance in my life and in the lives of those around me. I believe our world suffers from a genuine scarcity of compassion, nurture, and care for one another. My own awareness of my lack of capacity helps me humbly 'begin again' to learn a deeper compassion, and to join a path from the perennial wisdom that helps me learn from the ground up how to cultivate an inner life and act in relationship to 'be the change I seek to see in the world.'" ❁

Kirsten Rohde is a member of the Goodenough Community and the president of the sponsoring non-profit, The American Association for the Furtherance of Community. Her home is at Sahale, although she still works some of her time in Seattle. Her first experience with community living was as a student in Ann Arbor living in housing provided by the Inter Cooperative Council. Kirsten works as a research nurse in the fields of Alzheimer's Disease and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.



Taking the SCARE out of Scarcity

By Kiesa Kay

I've been working in an ecovillage for two years now, and along the way, I've learned that it takes more than momentum to keep a project from falling by the wayside. Scarcity feelings emerge and erupt when a need gets identified, a solution gets discovered, yet implementation of the solution goes dead in the water.

At this little community in the Blue Ridge Mountains, there's been a tiny problem with heating the Council Hall. Now the Council Hall is gorgeous. It has an amazing marble floor and beautiful recycled wood flooring, and the beams have been hewn from trees on the land. One founder tells the story of how he sat on the very spot of that Council Hall and felt three Cherokee ghosts rising from the ground, offering their blessings. It's that kind of spiritually fabulous.

And in the winter, it's cold. I teach there, and the little kids enter and watch their breath make little dragon clouds in the air. We gather around the ancient wood stove and put a tea kettle on the top to make some hot water to warm ourselves up. Thank goodness it's in the Carolinas; if we were any farther north, we could be shivering all day. After an hour or two, the sun usually emerges and the hall gets good passive solar heating.

Many solutions have been proposed, including a new stove and a radiant floor heating system. In fact, a big furnace got purchased a year ago and put in place next to the Council Hall—and there it sits to this day, partly because somebody read that these kind of furnaces pollute the environment, and partly due to an absence of consensus on getting it put in place. So now what?

Well, in spring and summer and autumn, it's no big deal. In winter, though, the kids get really cold. The teaching apprentice rises in the blue black cold and starts



PHOTOS: KIESA KAY

Council Hall: "gorgeous" but coooold!

up the old wood stove, and we feed it all day. It hasn't been replaced despite its inefficiency because nobody knows if the new furnace system—dubbed Tina Taylor—will be put in place there.

And that's what creates feelings of scarcity: that uncertainty, not knowing if something right will happen or if it will die because the energy for completion ends before the project reaches completion.

So what's the solution? I believe that even in intentional communities run by consensus, somebody has to be the one to take the lead, make the decision, and do the follow-through, even if naysayers stand pat.

We have an abundance of love and an absence of dollar figures. Everybody has to work for cash as well as work for themselves, and the hardest-working, youngest families sometimes leave because making a living takes too much away from making a life. And then come the community requirements—

\$100 a month and four hours of work a week—for people who are trying to parent, work full-time, and put their own houses together on their sites.

And yet, like the magical bumblebee who flies even though it's aerodynamically impossible, somehow it works. People love each other here. When one person's down, another one will lift up. When it's time to play, the drumming can be heard across the watershed.

Every place has its own kind of scarcity. I went to New York City to visit a pal, and saw a television program for the first time in a couple of years. I've been in the woods

(continued on p. 76)



Kiesa Kay's high-spirited students.



As Is:

Secrets to Having Enough

By

Ethan Hughes with Les Stitt
and the Possibility Alliance

An Abundance of Possibility

I have just returned to my desk from the lunch table at the Possibility Alliance, an intentional community in northeastern Missouri. During the meal, in an effort to help me generate ideas for this article, I invited community members and visitors to engage in discussion on the topics of *scarcity* and *abundance*. Let me present the myriad cast of characters involved: an anarchist with an interest in Zen Buddhism from Kansas City, Missouri; a radical Christian who hitchhiked here from western Pennsylvania; an American Buddhist who coordinates a permaculture center in Thailand; a Canadian who dropped out of high school to dress up as a superhero and bike around doing spontaneous good deeds; a recent college drop-out who likes making pottery, biking, and helping out on organic farms; a singing nomad; a French carpenter; and me, an excitable character born in a fishing town.

The group was very enthusiastic, happy to share their thoughts and ideas, and the ensuing passionate conversation ran well into the afternoon. Not surprisingly, I felt more joy throughout this process than I ever had drafting a piece for publication. I received many more insights than I can share here, and realized that this approach to writing was in itself an experiment in abundance. Drawing from this conversation and some thoughts of my own, this article will look towards ways of experiencing, redefining, and altering perceptions of scarcity and abundance.

Commodifying Needs and Thneeds

The word scarcity brings to mind an *absence of something desired*, a feeling of *going without*, or an *unmet need*. Some needs we are born with, such as a need for food, water, shelter, love, spiritual realization, etc. Others, outside of what might be considered fundamental necessities of life and self-actualization, our culture conditions us to think we need. These “needs” can be anything from coffee to electricity to cars to cell phones to the internet, but we don’t need these things in the same way we need those former needs. (In fact, they may be closer to what Dr. Seuss, in *The Lorax*, called “thneeds.”) Distinguishing between the two can be difficult because our culture has slowly blurred the distinction through the use of a highly abstract idea: commodity.

Some needs our culture conditions us to think we need— anything from coffee to electricity to cars to cell phones to the internet.

A commodity is something that can be bought or sold and is usually done so under a banner of convenience, necessity, or safety. Commodification seeps its way into our daily activities, as well as the way we work, socialize, entertain ourselves, and approach problems. It clouds even our basic view of existence. In addition, in our efforts to buy time, luxury, or security, we as a society spend an enormous amount of time earning money, ending up with precious little time and energy to dedicate to ourselves, our loved ones, or our dreams.

As default members of consumer society; we purchase all kinds of goods, be they industrially produced or fair trade, local, or organic—and sure enough, the success of this model depends upon consumers feeling a constant state of scarcity. Indeed, business corporations spend billions of dollars yearly on propaganda just to convince us of our lack. Of course, they

*Everything is for sale
in the scarcity reality:
health, mindfulness,
beauty, even our
very meaning
and purpose.*



*Above: An Abundance: free of things.
Left: The desert of scarcity.*

We rage against Hollywood and mega theaters but love independent art cinemas showing some of the same films.

Community ≠ Immunity

Ecovillages, communities, and cohouses are not immune to this culture of scarcity. Many communities begin their existence in a state of financial lack because of land debt. This perpetuates a feeling of scarcity of funds for new projects and infrastructure. Time is scarce because there are always more structures to build, more gardens to plant, more consensus meetings to attend. This state of temporal overwhelm pervades

much of the communities movement, creating emotional turmoil and disconnection. I have been struck by the number of folks who have talked about feeling isolated inside a community. Finally, how many people in the communities movement put aside their own passions and heart path for what “needs” to be done for the community as a whole? Such a situation leads

to burnout and scarcity of fulfillment and meaning.

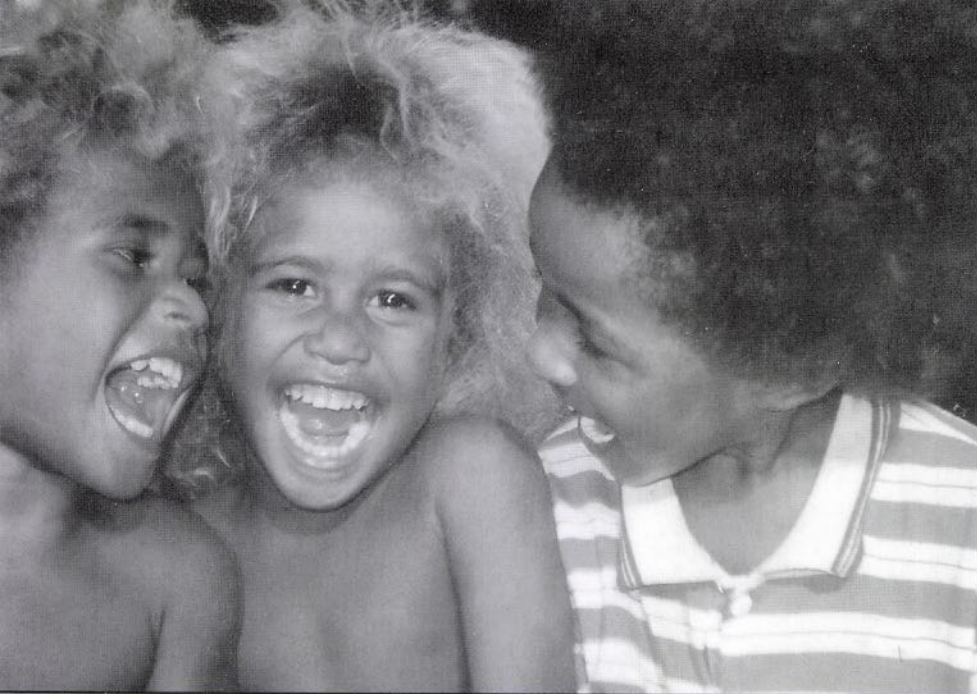
Many of these factors, I believe, lead communities to charge visitors high fees for food, tent sites, and access to drinking water and showers. Residents and interns face similar costs:

say the path back to abundance is just a dollar or two away. We may soon believe that chocolate, a new CD, mindfulness training, or a new yoga mat actually fulfills a core need (core needs being, in actuality, such things as food, shelter, and clothing). Soon this feeling of scarcity extends beyond material objects to things like time, connection with others, passion, and on and on. Everything is for sale in this reality: health, mindfulness, beauty, even our very meaning and purpose.

This deeply ingrained sense of scarcity does not escape the alternative culture, including ecovillages and other intentional communities, although these groups often wrap their consumerism in beautiful and mindful packages. I often hear phrases like, “It’s fair trade chocolate,” or “It’s an educational documentary,” or “It’s a festival for change,” to justify

our consumerism. We lambast Starbucks but celebrate local coffee shops, even though the beans are still being shipped thousands of miles. We praise Rice Dream and Kashi but conveniently ignore their connections to Heinz and Kellogg’s.

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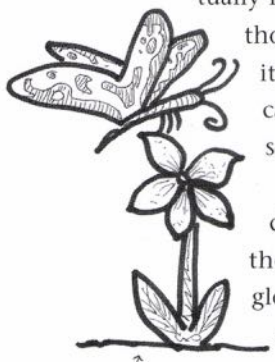
Smiles are Free!

monthly maintenance fees or dues for onsite projects or to repay community land loans, fees for courses in environmental education, Permaculture and natural building, etc., all totaling in the thousands and tens of thousands of dollars. Even more alarming is the commodification and sale of mindfulness, enlightenment, and spirituality in general. Historically, none of the great founders of any wisdom or spiritual tradition ever charged for their insights, and yet I hear and read of expensive retreats, lectures, and courses with well-known contemporary icons of spiritual and New Age movements.

To further illustrate the incongruity of this system I will rephrase what most communities currently seem to be proposing: (1) The earth as a whole is sick and continues to be poisoned, its life forms and its ecosystems are dying and in a state of near collapse, and as a collective humans are out of touch with the natural world; (2) We in the ecological/communities movement have the skills and know-how to reenter into dialog with the earth and create (or recreate) a balanced, harmonious relationship; (3) These skills and information could help all life survive, heal, and eventually flourish, but we will not share them unless

those interested have sufficient financial capital to contribute; (4) Without money we cannot meet all of our needs so we have absolutely no choice but to require fees.

Why have we accepted this? How does charging fees empower individuals to leave their mainstream jobs, become free of the global capitalist market, and gain the skills necessary to sustain themselves and live in



written so far. I'm all too aware of how we've been lulled into conformity with this system and denied the right to provide for ourselves and truly make our lives as we see fit. But I also know that a more radical world is possible, a world without the need for wage-slavery or money, where we can feel truly empowered. And I don't mean in 10 or 20 or 50 years—I mean now. That was true for Gandhi, who,

when asked the secret of his life in three words, replied simply: "Renounce and Enjoy."

Embracing a Gift Economy

Only one truly radical idea can free us from the throes of consumer culture: *We are not dependent upon any object or thing for our contentment, joy, or effectiveness.* When we fully adopt this viewpoint, we understand

that almost all scarcity is a creation of the mind.

What if everything we needed was free? What if we began believing we could get our needs met outside of the global capitalist market economy? What if we made our own music, food, clothing, stories, and art, transcending consumerism? What if we pursued most vigorously those things which escape commodification entirely, which I will argue are the greatest things in life: laughter, walks in the woods, making love, picking wild berries, swimming in rivers, singing with friends, climbing trees, mud fights, listening to birds, etc.?

Conventional wisdom tells us that giving things away or giving things up is a sacrifice. We have been convinced that sacrifice is negative, that through sacrifice we become martyred, removed from living fully. But sacrifice means more than just giving something up: it means letting go of something to receive something more valuable. To give up your savings

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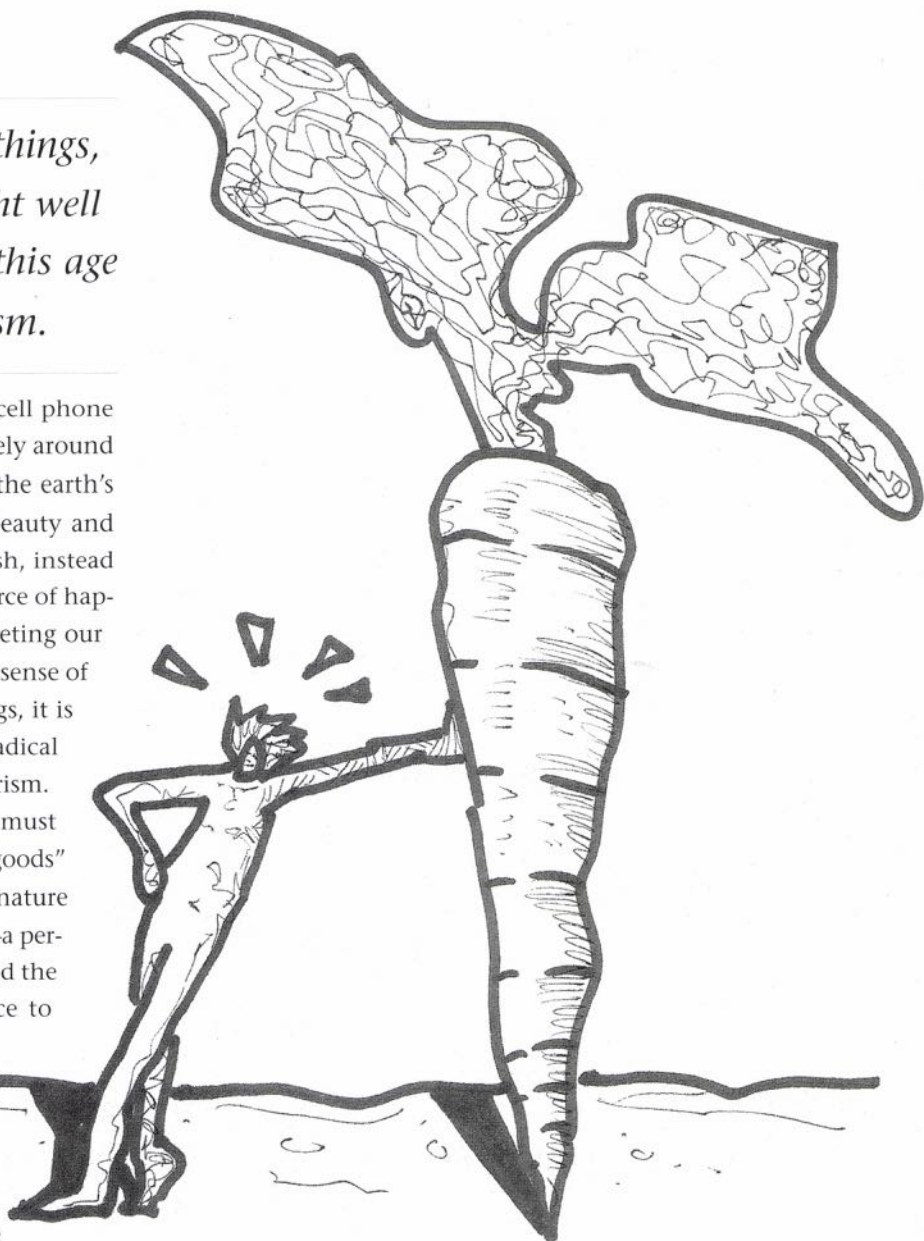
The popular quote, "joy is not in things, it is in us," if taken to heart, might well be the most radical declaration in this age of materialism and consumerism.

to save a friend's life in the hospital, to give up a cell phone to connect more deeply with the people immediately around you, to give up chocolate to lessen the strain on the earth's ecosystems—these can be joyful actions, full of beauty and meaning. Sacrifice in this way lets all of life flourish, instead of just our own. It also helps us internalize our source of happiness, which may enable us to move towards meeting our needs with fewer monetary costs, and increase our sense of abundance. The popular quote "joy is not in things, it is in us," if taken to heart, might well be the most radical declaration in this age of materialism and consumerism.

To begin to exercise this shift in perspective, we must examine the original gift economy, a place where "goods" and "services" have always been free: Nature. In nature nothing is owned and nothing is left out. The sun—a perfect distance from this planet—shines, rain falls, and the soil provides additional nutrients and sustenance to plants and microorganisms who in turn provide energy to other forms of life. Gravity holds us together, air waits ready to fill our lungs, and millions of our cells die and are replaced daily. Energy passes through all things and is never hoarded; nothing is owned. Abundance is everywhere. The gift economy is over 14 billion years old and any human cultures that watched and learned from nature emulated it. As Hafiz observed, "Even after all this time, the sun never says to the earth 'you owe me.' Look what happens with a love like that—it lights up the whole world."

Success Stories

Human experiments in the gift economy also exist and are at least equally inspiring; they have resulted in countless forms of abundance, sometimes at unbelievable levels. Anthropological studies and archaeological evidence demonstrate that for most of human history, sharing and abundance were the norm. Life for humans before agriculture seems not to have been the cruel, difficult existence that we often surmise. Some anthropologists assert that early humans spent as few as two hours a day foraging, and although contemporary indigenous peoples and hunter-gatherers show a wide array of differences, many share a lifestyle of relative leisure and cultural revelry



in the abundance of the natural world. Their health and livelihoods seem to be significantly threatened only when they come into contact with our own culture.

There are also movements and communities, from the local to the global, which charge nothing for room and board; instead, they communicate their needs to their visitors, who in turn provide what they can, resulting in a wonderful give-and-take dynamic. The Ark of Lanza del Vasto in France, Tinker's Bubble in England, the European Cooperative of Longo Mai, the Rainbow Family, Bread and Puppet Theater, WWOOF (Willing Workers on Organic Farms) and hundreds of anarchist centers and collectives around the world are all great examples of communities making this energy exchange entirely without or with minimal need for money. On the spiritual plane, at least one movement offers mindfulness training for free, and states that charging money to teach the Dharma (spiritual wisdom) corrupts it. This movement is called Vipassana, currently led by S.N. Goenka, a Burmese Buddhist teacher.

*Amazing things happen
when we give freely to
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instead of strive for profit.*

There are centers all over the world in this tradition that teach meditation techniques and feed and house guests for 10 days at no cost, regardless of one's spiritual or non-spiritual beliefs. The Dana (gift) they most ask for in return is not money, but human energy in the form of service to help run other courses after an individual's participation. The organization is thriving.

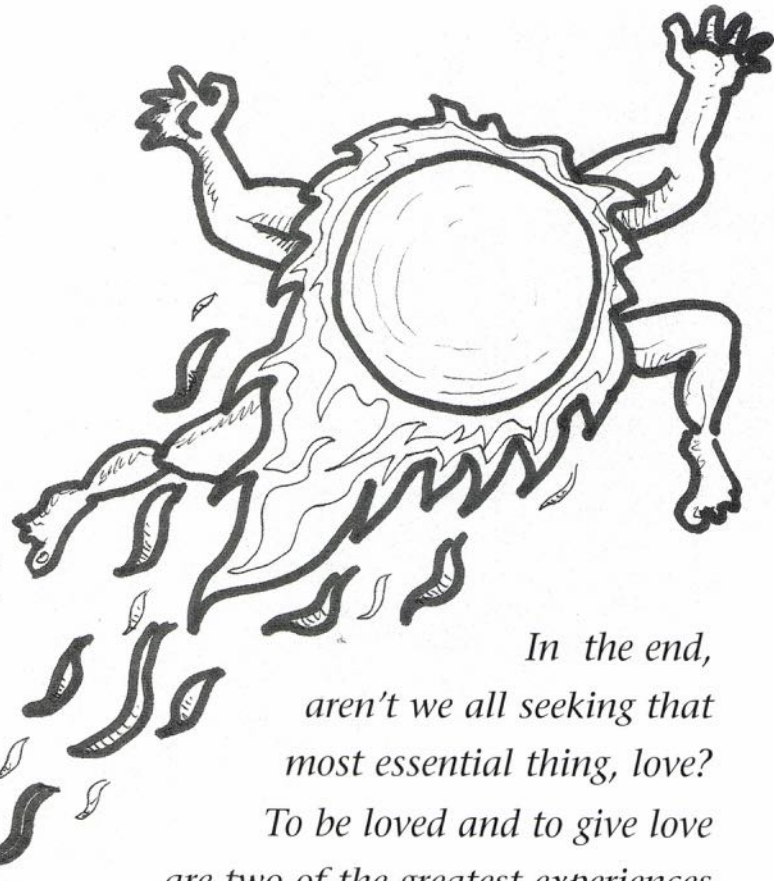
Peace Pilgrim, who walked for peace while owning nothing, is a great example of an individual embracing the gift economy. Thousands of people who crossed her path spoke of receiving amazing gifts and abundance. What did she have to give? Herself. Friends of Peace Pilgrim continue her tradition of giving by sending anyone who is interested a free book about her life.

Of course, none of these examples is perfect. Many have been overtaken by opportunists, people with a deep sense of scarcity. Yet, if we view these communities and projects as a whole, we see that amazing things happen when we give freely to enrich the lives of others, instead of strive for profit.

Finally, I can tell you from direct experience that not only can one live or run a community without asking for money, but that one's life and community can flourish. I have given away \$150,000 and received double that back to spread across the world. I have given all my possessions away and been able to take care of myself. I have ridden off on my bicycle across America to serve and have received far, far more than I could ever give. We have begun the Possibility Alliance based on the gift economy, and the 80-acre sanctuary has been paid for in only a year. We open our doors and the land to everyone and share our skills and services with the community at no cost and we are given far more than we would ever believe. And this experience has been truly priceless.

New Forms of Abundance

We must find a shared purpose at this time and develop other ways to create and support abundance. We must find our way out of this culture of scarcity. What would happen if we dumped our DVDs, laptops, cable and satellite televisions; our iPods, coffee shop excursions, and dining out? What if we



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aren't we all seeking that
most essential thing, love?
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are two of the greatest experiences
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With love there is only abundance.*

wrote our own stories, spent time learning, grew and cooked our own food, and made our own music? We can become creators again. It is really only a tiny sacrifice to enter the abundance of nature. What if we allowed ourselves to follow this guidance?: *Quit your job if you do not enjoy it or it does not align with your values. Serve others, give everything away, start working for free. Do an experiment. If it fails and you do not feel greater freedom and abundance, you can always return to things. Consumer culture will be there waiting for you to re-enter.*

Let us follow our hearts—doing what we love and what makes us come alive. To me, a single swallowtail butterfly is worth more wealth than could be held in all the banks and safes in the world. A vision—for example, the vision of honoring all of life—can have incredible power to nourish us, making it easier to renounce things and experiences from the market economy. Life gives us a chance to change everything.

In the end, aren't we all seeking that most essential thing, love? To be loved and to give love are two of the greatest experiences in life and can not be bought, sold, or manufactured. Love dissolves scarcity. With love there is only abundance. As Rumi said, "One hour of love is worth a hundred worlds."

(continued on p. 75)

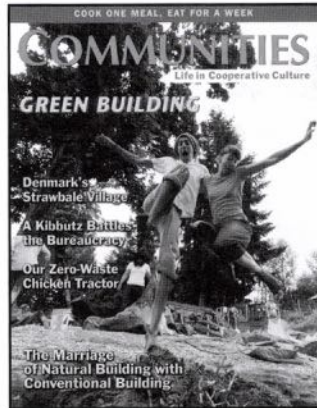
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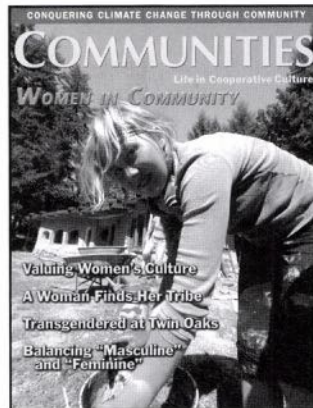
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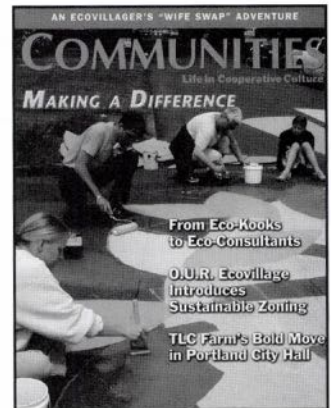
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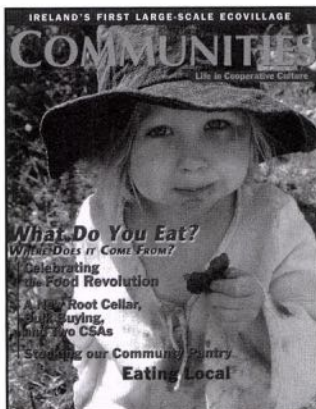
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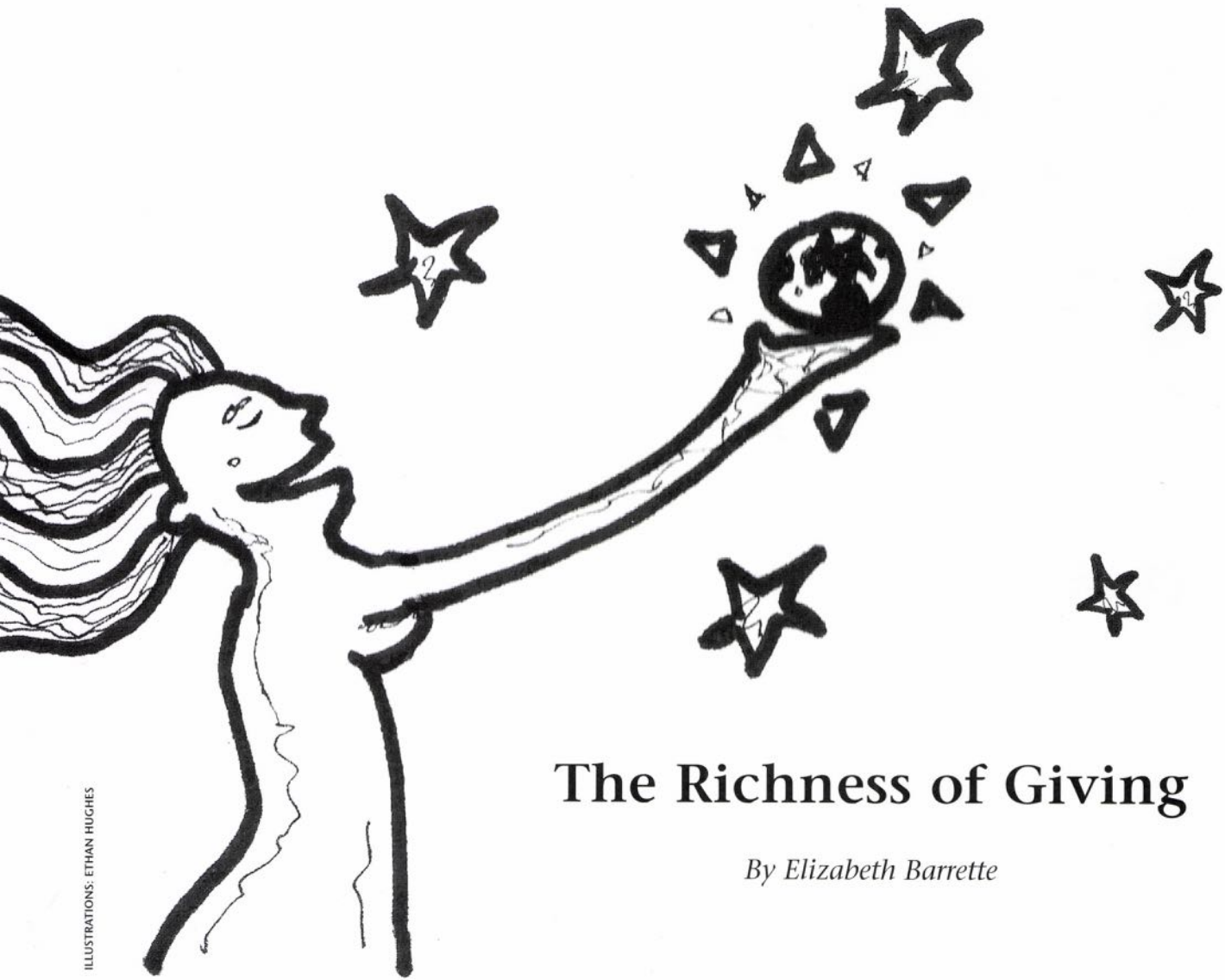
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#141



ILLUSTRATIONS: ETHAN HUGHES

The Richness of Giving

By Elizabeth Barrette

Imagine a world where wealth is measured not by how much you have, but by how much you give to others. Imagine people in a huge house full of stuff being considered “poor” because they never pass any of it along to someone else. Imagine going out on a summer day and seeing sign after sign posted, not for a Rummage Sale, but for a Giveaway. There would be the same tables heaped with clothes, knickknacks, and books—but no price tags.

Sound impossible? It’s not. It’s actually a very old idea, and it has appeared in cultures around the world. The modern consumer culture is fairly new, and it isn’t perfect. So let’s consider some alternatives that would work in a community context.

Benefits of Generosity

Many traditional cultures around the world have an economy based not on buying and selling, but on giving. The constant exchange of gifts fosters an intricate network of social connections. You give and receive gifts among your relatives, friends, neighbors, and coworkers. This encourages people

to get to know each other’s likes and dislikes. It also limits the gap between those who have the most and those who have the least, in terms of material goods. This translates well into modern intentional communities.

On a personal level, giving teaches you to let go of things you no longer need, instead of clinging to them. Practice in giving away material goods makes it easier to release old habits or ideas that have become more trouble than they’re worth. The Buddhist principle of *dana paramita* encompasses non-attachment and generosity; it is part of the path to enlightenment and the relief of suffering.¹ Consumerist society pressures everyone to want things. If you can avoid wanting things, or turn off the “wanting” without acquiring things, then you can enjoy more contentment and suffer less yearning.

Also, helping others makes us feel good. It’s fun to watch someone open a present and see their face light up. When bad things happen—such as a flood or a house fire—generosity can relieve some of the stress both for the victim and the bystanders. You can’t undo the damage, but you can donate clothes, furniture, food, or other necessities to replace what

was lost. Then you don't have to stand around feeling totally helpless, and the victims can begin to recover.

Finally, gift giving creates a sense of abundance. When we give things away, that reminds us that we have more than we really need. This cultivates gratitude and appreciation for the things we choose to keep. Wiccan tradition advises, "All that you do

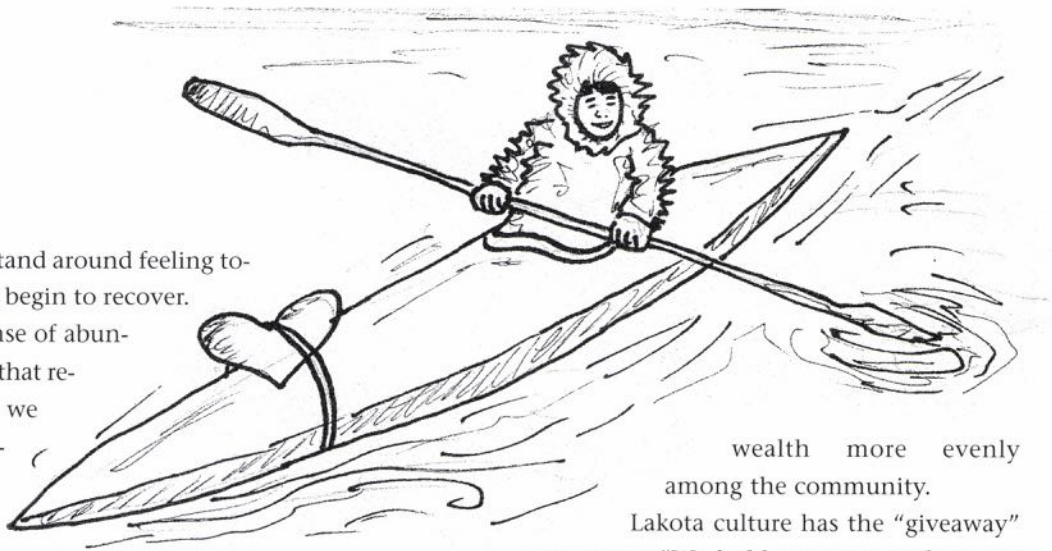
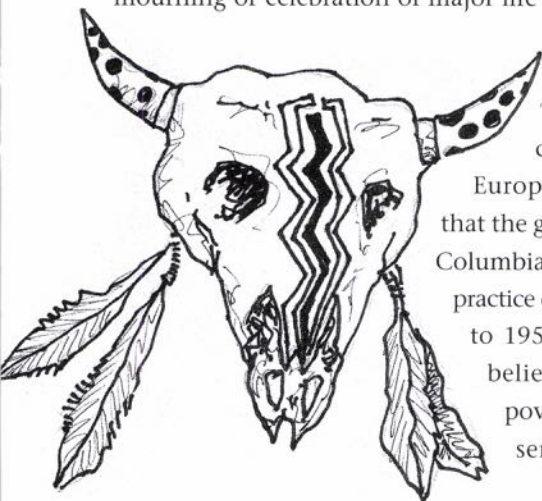
returns to you three times over." Likewise, Inuit people have a saying, "The gift must move." It's like water: stagnant water yields no power, but flowing water can turn a millwheel. When we move the energy of generosity, and the gifts themselves, they gain momentum and bring greater abundance into our lives.

How Cultures Give

Different cultures have different customs and names relating to their traditional expressions of generosity. You can find examples in history and in fiction. Some survive today, but it's a challenge to go against the consumer culture.

The Inuit, and other peoples along the northwest coast of the United States and Canada, have a custom they call "potlatch." A potlatch is a big community party centered around a host who gives away huge quantities of food, blankets, beads, and other practical and luxurious items. The event also includes speeches by the host and guest(s) of honor, dancing and singing, a sumptuous feast, and games. Potlatches can express mourning or celebration of major life events.

The concept of a gift-driven economy is so incomprehensible to European-derived society that the government of British Columbia actually banned the practice of potlatch from 1887 to 1951.² They mistakenly believed that it caused poverty, when in fact, it served to distribute



wealth more evenly among the community.

Lakota culture has the "giveaway" ceremony: "We hold onto our *otuhan*, our

give-aways, because they help us to remain Indian. All the big events in our lives—birth and death, joy and sadness—can be occasions for a give-away."³ In times of sorrow, the give-away allows grieving people to externalize their pain. There is a Lakota saying for this: "Give until it hurts." A person would give away most or all of their worldly goods, and exercise their grief for four days. After that, their friends and relatives would come give them gifts, and the grieving person would start to feel better, having released the feeling instead of bottling it up.

Furthermore: "A *wopila*—a thanksgiving for something good that happened to a person—is also a time for giving away things."⁴ Such a ceremony might be held when a young girl becomes a woman, or a couple gets married, or a baby is born. The host gives away presents to express appreciation for the good fortune in his or her life, and to share that fortune with friends and family.

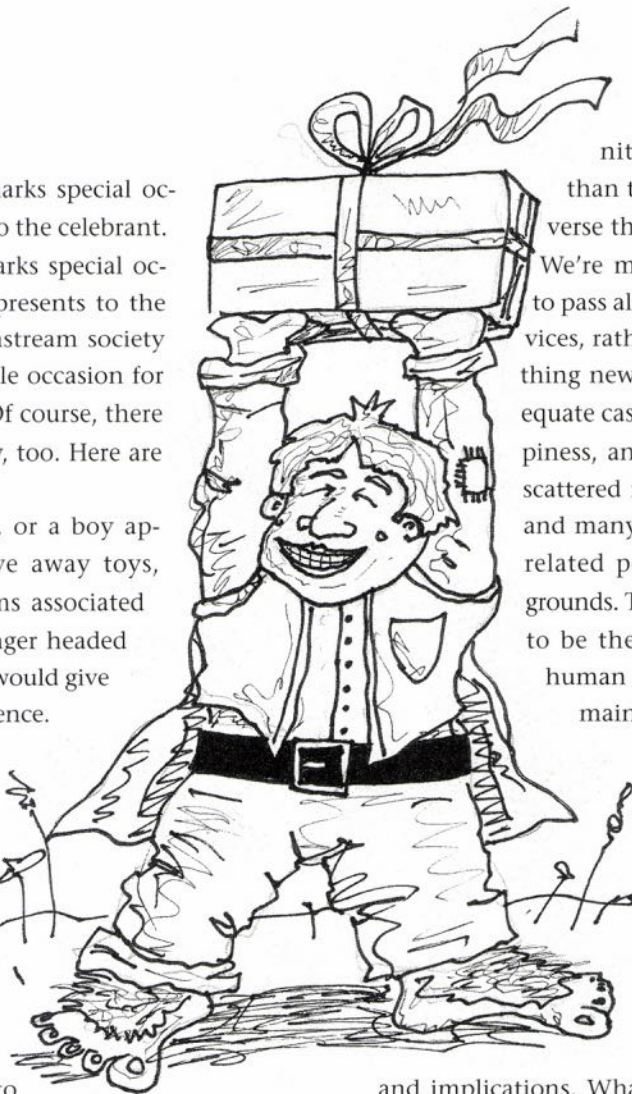
Give-away customs also appear in fiction: "Hobbits give presents to other people on their own birthdays. Not very expensive ones, as a rule, and not so lavishly as on this occasion; but it was not a bad system. Actually in Hobbiton and Bywater every day in the year was somebody's birthday, so that every hobbit in those parts had a fair chance of at least one present at least once a week. But they never got tired of them."⁵

Nor were the presents necessarily new, as revealed by one of Tolkien's linguistic notes: "for anything that Hobbits had no immediate use for, but were unwilling to throw away, they called a *mathom*. Their dwellings were apt to become rather crowded with mathoms, and many of the presents that passed from hand to hand were of that sort."⁶ Fans of Middle Earth have been known to hold "Hobbit birthday parties" at which the host gives away presents.

Occasions for Giving

The modern consumerist culture marks special occasions by having guests give presents to the celebrant. Conversely, a gift-exchange culture marks special occasions by having the celebrant give presents to the guests. Thus, any occasion when mainstream society would give gifts to someone is a suitable occasion for someone to host a give-away instead. Of course, there are many other reasons for a give-away, too. Here are some to get you started.

- A girl approaching womanhood, or a boy approaching manhood, would give away toys, clothes, and other outgrown items associated with childhood. Similarly, a teenager headed for college—an adult experience—would give away items associated with adolescence.
- A married couple whose last infant has reached kindergarten might give away all the baby things: crib, changing table, infant clothes, bottles, etc. to new parents.
- A retired couple might sell their house to buy a recreational vehicle and spend their golden years traveling—and hold a give-away to disperse most of the things in their house; everything that wouldn't fit in the RV.
- Someone who just moved into a new home could hold a give-away to thank all the friends who helped them move, or as a way to meet their new neighbors.
- Someone might host a "Hobbit birthday party" and give presents to all their friends and relatives, then compare that with an ordinary present-receiving birthday party to see which was more fun.
- A person joining or leaving an intentional community might hold a give-away to mark the transition.



The intentional community culture is less acquisitive than the mainstream, but more diverse than traditional tribal cultures. We're more likely to make presents, to pass along used items, or to give services, rather than always buying something new as a gift. We're less likely to equate cash or goods with success, happiness, and abundance. But we're also scattered in bunches across the world, and many communities consist of unrelated people from divergent backgrounds. That's different from what used to be the norm throughout most of human history. Things that work for mainstream folks, or that worked for our ancestors, may not always work for us now.

We often reject consumerist principles without necessarily knowing what to use as a replacement. Nor can we simply adopt customs wholesale without considering their context and implications. What we can do is study the alternatives, making an informed choice about the values we choose to express and the cultural life we want to live. Then we can adapt—or invent—customs to fit our objectives. ❀

Elizabeth Barrette writes nonfiction, fiction, and poetry in the fields of alternative spirituality, speculative fiction, and gender studies. She serves as Dean of Studies for the Grey School of Wizardry (www.greyschool.info), where she teaches classes in leadership, friendship, and other communal skills. She supports the growth of community in diverse forms and is active in local organizations. Her favorite activities include gardening for wildlife and public speaking at Pagan events and science fiction conventions. Visit her blog at ysabetwordsmith.livejournal.com.

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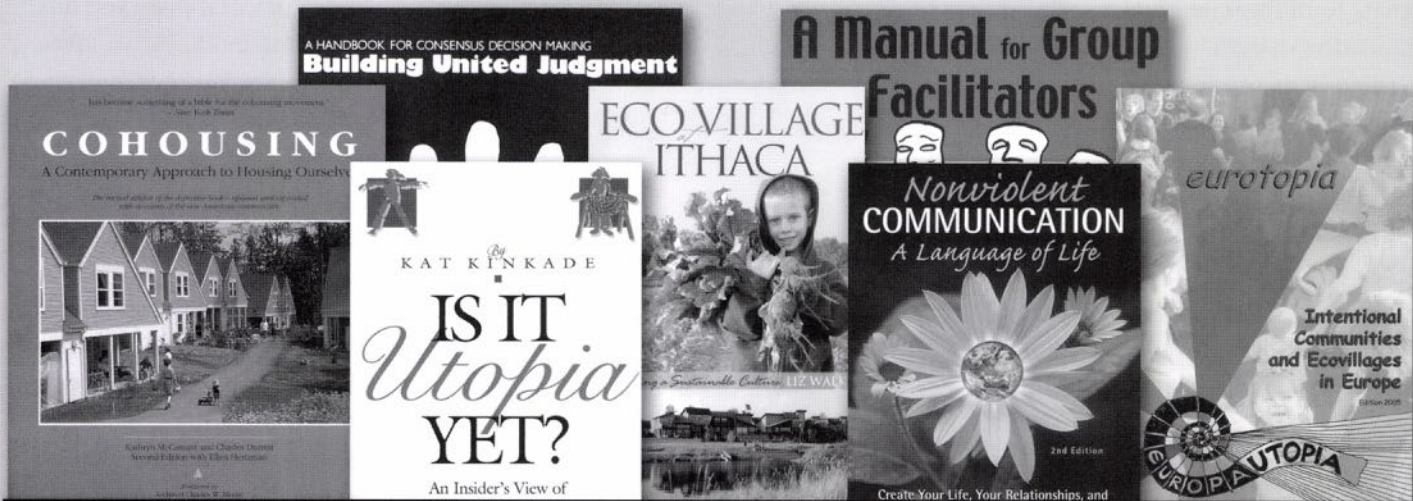
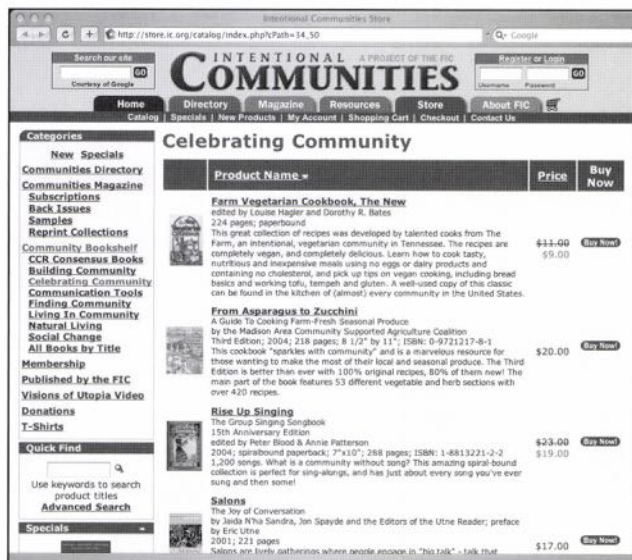
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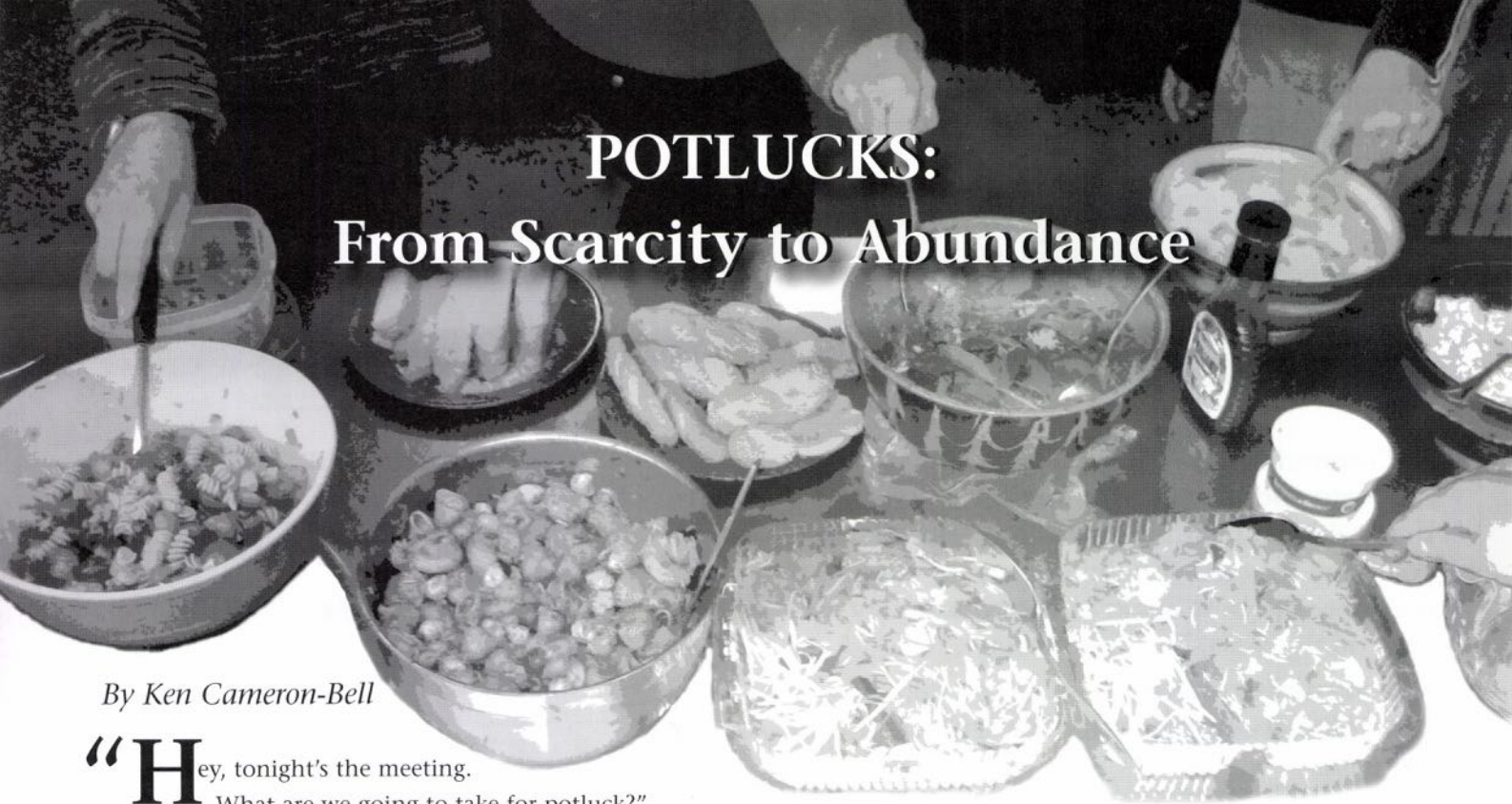
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POTLUCKS: From Scarcity to Abundance



By Ken Cameron-Bell

“Hey, tonight’s the meeting. What are we going to take for potluck?”

“Look in the fridge.”

“Not much. Some veggies and a little cheese.”

“We have a half package of macaroni. What about a pasta salad?”

“OK. I hope it will be enough. Our group can be a pretty hungry bunch.”

How many times have similar conversations played out in preparation for the traditional community meal we call “the potluck”? And how many times have those potlucks produced so much more than could be eaten? Our individual scarcity turns into community abundance—magic.

The origins of the potluck meal are buried in societal lore. The term usually referred to food provided for an unexpected guest, whatever was left in the pot. Throughout our history we have evidence of the sharing of food: the parable of the loaves and fishes, early

Sara’s Apron: One of Daybreak’s celebration rituals for new members is the presentation of a personalized apron. The recipient receives a custom-decorated apron from his or her “buddy,” an older member who has been a mentor through the membership process.



American pilgrims sharing with Indians, family reunions, church suppers. Everyone brings a little, and we have enough.

Of course, scarcity is relative. One person’s idea of scarcity is “not enough for several courses,” while another’s is stone soup. However, the concept of sharing what we have collectively is a community idea. It is one reason we intentionally form and join communities.

Daybreak Cohousing is a newly formed intentional community in North Portland, Oregon, and potlucks have helped form a basis for our social lives together. We don’t have a physical place yet; it is still being built. But we have community. We have come together from various parts of Portland and beyond, and our potlucks reflect our diversity and food preferences.

“[Potlucks] give a sense of who our members are,” says Martha Wagner. Curries, noodles and Mediterranean style dishes, recipes from the Northwest, Midwest, and South, homegrown vegetables, and fresh market produce all make appearances at our table.

(continued on p. 71)

FREE TO SERVE: Notes from a Needs-Based Economy

By Chris Foraker

Throw It Against the Wall

Gandhi said something about life being an experiment. Experiments drive discovery. We gather the best information available, from books, stories, old people, previous experiments, and try something new in service to our thought dreams. "If my thought dreams could be seen they'd probably put my head in a guillotine." Dylan is right: thought dreams are dangerous. I'm not suggesting the following is very dangerous. It's actually quite ordinary—quite practical—just some observations from experiments with my own personal economy. But it does involve a process of dreaming, experimenting, and then observing—the stuff of creation. When we're creating (or co-creating) our world instead of accepting our world, we do become empowered. An empowered people can be dangerous to disempowering tendencies.

Wal-Mart came to Cottage Grove, Oregon, in '94, convinced the city council to change local zoning laws, and got the go-ahead to build a 108,000-square-foot warehouse store. In 2006, desiring expansion, Wal-Mart applied for another zoning change that would permit the construction of a 160,000-square-foot super center. Public hearings were called, yes/no buttons made, positions taken, and after six hours of testimony spanning three days, not much was surprising: well-dressed corporate lawyers; polarized atmosphere; emotional testimonies from those for and those against. It didn't take me long to put my anti-zoning-change sentiments into words which I delivered unemotionally in the fog of a waning fever. The hearing continued on at a boring pace, reaching a peak of monotony during the testimony of my fellow "againsts," whose collective voice became tortuously redundant and, I hate to say it, a bit self-indulgent.

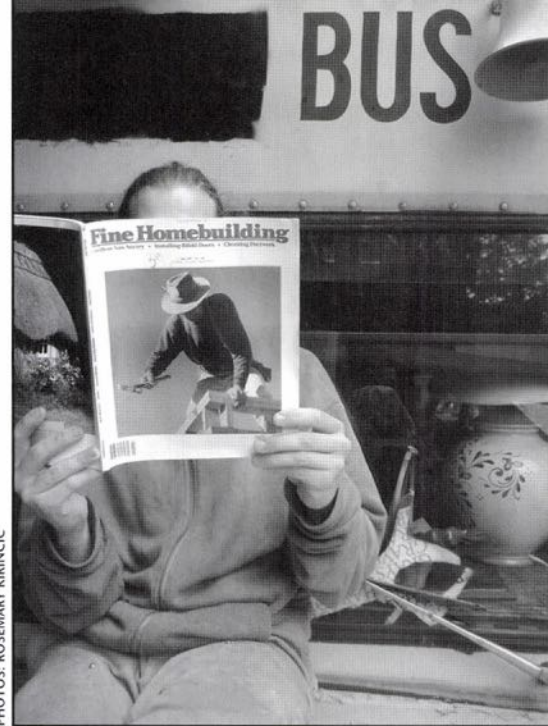
The highlight of the public hearing for me was the testimony of the "fors." They helped exercise my internal sound receptors of empathy that, on occasion, allow me to pull out of the emotive mud of a polarized landscape and hear the concrete needs of "the other." What I heard coming from the "other side" was *I'm poor, whether from low-paying work or a fixed income, and I depend on low-cost goods to get by.* I could understand that. I can also, by all conventional standards, be considered poor. I make between \$200 and \$400 a month, heat my home and cook with wood, cut my costs when I can. I don't have running water. I'm not subsidized by wealthy parents. I live in a school bus.

An amusing tension arose. Here I am in much the same predicament as many from Clan Super Size, but instead of a desperate sense of scarcity and need for low-cost goods, I feel embraced by a world of hope and abundance. I feel secure while others feel vulnerable. I feel my needs are taken care of while others feel life is too expensive. What was the difference? This tension sparked observation.

Sharing the Surplus, Natural Giving, and the Community Context

Several months ago I was in need of space to park my bus. I wanted to

be two miles outside of town, hopefully near the bike path with the potential to run an extension cord from a garage or outside outlet for electricity. The deadline for moving was past and I was starting to feel anxious to unburden my generous host. That Thursday during the Cottage Grove community's weekly social gathering—a mix of homegrown goods,



PHOTOS: ROSEMARY KIRINCIC

*By all conventional standards,
I would be considered poor.
I make between \$200 and \$400
a month, cook and heat my
home with wood.
I don't have running water.
I'm not subsidized by
wealthy parents.
I live in a school bus.*



Exchanging goods and services: Chris stocking a woodshed for the winter.

tight spacing, and free locally made wine—I was introduced to a friend of a friend. After some friendly formalities, the subject of pursuit came up and she promptly offered me a space to park my bus: two miles outside of town, across from the bike path, near an electrical outlet. In return she asked for dry firewood and help with projects around the property.

This event was a first glimpse into a new way of looking at my personal economy. Over time, these same types of exchanges replayed over and over, generating a pattern. Slowly, words came to describe the pattern, not complete but like the first rough sketches of a living document. At its most fundamental level, it is members of a community sharing their surplus in the service of each others' needs. One might call it a needs-based economy.

Permaculture teaches us to share the surplus. It is not an act of charity where we create personal scarcity, but an act of sharing abundance. Sharing surplus can be as natural as giving away two-day-old baked goods destined for the compost, cuttings from a prolific raspberry patch, or squash from a bountiful harvest.

Permaculture teaches us to share the surplus. When we give away our surplus we can give it joyfully because, by definition, it is extra. It is not an act of charity where we create personal scarcity, but an act of sharing abundance. Sharing our surplus is as natural as giving away two-day-old baked goods destined for the compost, cuttings from a prolific raspberry patch, or squash from a bountiful harvest. When we receive a gift of surplus we can do so with dignity because we are confident we are not receiving more than can be comfortably given.

Marshall Rosenberg reminds us that giving to someone in the service of his or her need is satisfying. To illustrate this idea, he suggests recalling the last time we helped fulfill someone's need, thinking on it for a moment and noticing how we feel. This exercise, as he describes, always produces smiles and satisfaction the world around.

These ideas, though complete in their own right, are most satisfying when practiced in the context of community. Community can be understood as an intertwined latticework of people connected by a shared place and/or shared aspirations. Sharing our surplus and giving in the service of each others' needs works well in community because a community is a cooperative project that gives back. Each individual act of giving is seen in relation to and as a part of a greater whole. We don't give aimlessly in a fragmented social landscape but intentionally and joyfully in the service of a larger project. When we give within a community we also feel a sense of security—almost like a smart investment—because a community reciprocates and responds, based on its humanity, to our changing needs. A group of people is far more resourceful than one alone.

As winter approached I was in need of space. My host had a surplus of space and was in need of a certain type of skill,

which I was able to provide. Since living at the two-mile marker I have brought her dry firewood, helped paint a wall, remove a shelf, unclog a drain, clean junk from the yard, plant trees, and landscape. Going into spring our agreement has been fruitful and rewarding.

Living in a Needs-Based Economy

The willingness to exchange goods and services directly is essential to a needs-based economy because it changes the way we see the world. When we begin looking at our life as a mosaic of needs rather than a system of alienating labor and consumption, we transcend currency and put ourselves in touch with the abundance generated by an entire community.

It is common for someone to have the following thinking: "I need money so that I can buy the things I lack." This line of thinking is limiting and internally conflicting. It disconnects us from what we actually want and calls on a disempowering currency to mediate between us and our dreams. Instead, if we are able to envision our needs without currency, we open ourselves to the abundance of an entire community's surplus facilitated by people's tendency towards natural giving.

As winter arrived in Oregon, I soon discovered that living in the equivalent of a giant metal mailbox could be quite cold. Heat became an immediate priority. Wood was the natural choice, so I began my search for a stove and dry firewood, both of which I thought would be difficult to find as those more prepared began to calculate the heating power

of their now dwindling reserves. On some of the colder mornings, as I lay under five layers of insulation watching my breath take shape in taunting cold-smoke signals above me, I considered the stoves listed for sale on craigslist

By exchanging goods and services directly, we resist the tendency to do unfulfilling, alienating work.

and the pick-up trucks of firewood waiting and ready for delivery in downtown Cottage Grove. But, as things became desperate, a friend of a friend offered his old wood stove, just the right size, being stored in an abandoned trailer outside of town. No one was using it so he said I could have it for at least the winter. After heating with kiln-dried, quick-burning, industrial forestry waste for a while, I received a pickup truck load of dry hardwood and fir from a family of land stewards. So for most of the winter I stayed mostly warm.

By exchanging goods and services directly, we resist the tendency to do unfulfilling, alienating work. Robert Heilman de-



When home is the equivalent of a giant metal mailbox, heating became an immediate priority.

The solution: a loaner stove that was being stored in an abandoned trailer.

scribes life as an industrial logger in rural Oregon: "Alienation is an occupational disease, one that afflicts each of us when we sell

our time for money. It brings a numbness of spirit that makes all sorts of horrible situations seem routine."

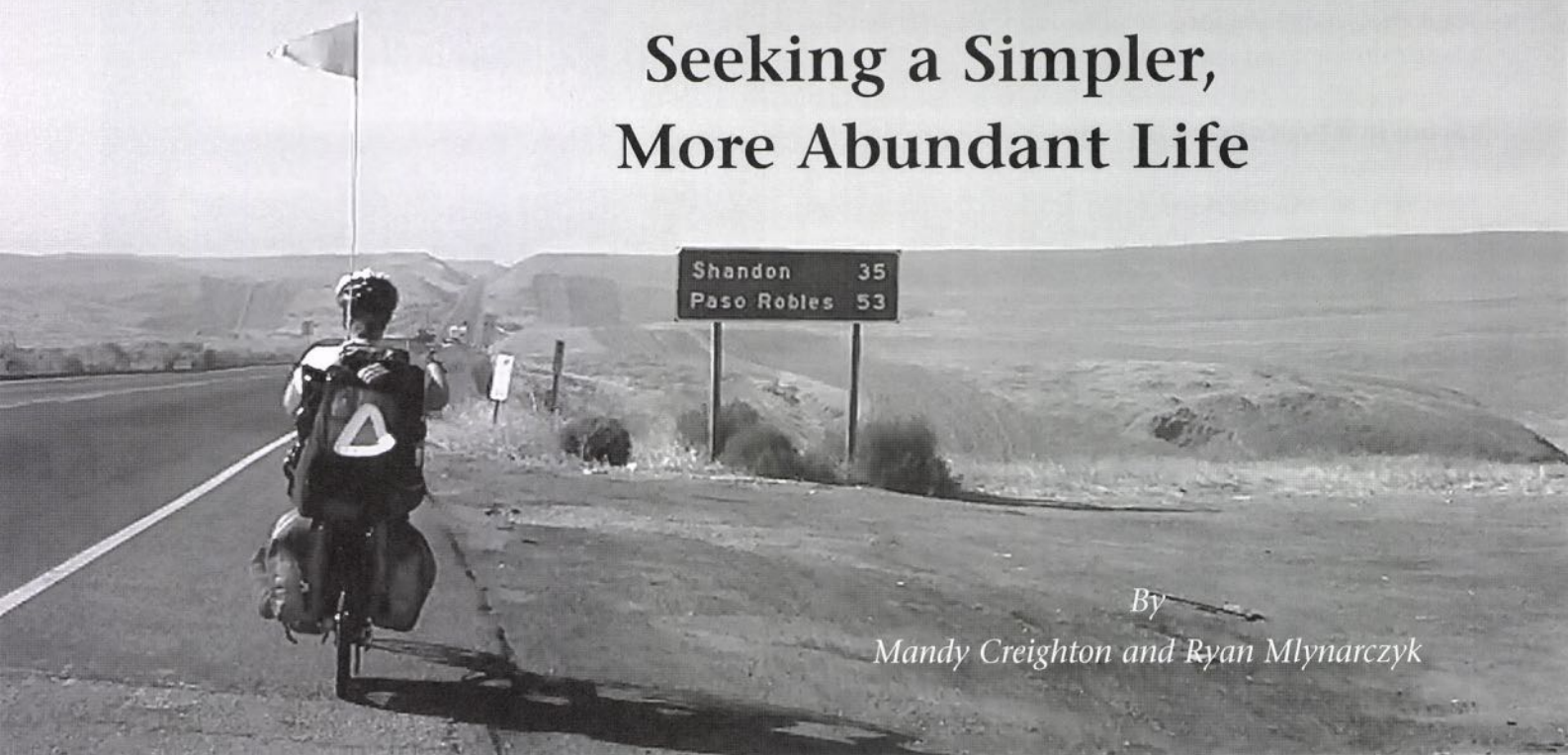
Instead, when we exchange directly, both giver and recipient benefit. In giving, we become connected to the act of creation, which is exhilarating. We once again become masters of our own time, liberated from the inevitable exploitation of a boss-wage system. Time becomes abundant and quality and joy can once again be incorporated into our work. Anything created by caring hands is infused with a uniqueness and life—easily seen in the difference between a modularized suburbia and a handmade home, or between a generic store-bought card with a "birthday check" enclosed, and a gift made with care and attention. In this way we become involved in each other's lives and allow parts of our internal and external landscapes to be shaped by our neighbors' artistic and clever natures. By exchanging directly we strengthen a culture of natural giving and shared surplus.

The thought of working for a wage to purchase a stove and cord of firewood now seems silly when faced with the possibilities available in a connected community. When the rains stop, I will gladly replace the amount of wood that was given to me or perhaps double the amount or triple, or perhaps I'll

(continued on p. 77)

From Car and House to Bicycle and Tent:

Seeking a Simpler, More Abundant Life



By

Mandy Creighton and Ryan Mlynarczyk

Have you ever thought about selling your house, your car, getting rid of most of your possessions, and heading out in search of a new way of life? Have you ever actually done it? Meet Ryan and Mandy, two young people riding a tandem bike around the United States for the next year filming a documentary about finding sustainable community called *Within Reach* (www.withinreachmovie.com).

Neither of us had any sort of crazy spiritual awakening one night and suddenly decided to give all our possessions to the poor to become ascetics. However, over the course of several years, as we collected more and more stuff while at the same time feeling more and more burdened by the supposed requirements of life, each of us came to the realization that true wealth must come from something unseen, untouchable. So we began simply asking the questions: "Where does the real stuff of life come from?" "How can I create more time to do what really matters?" "Is all this stuff what I really need and want, or is it something else?"

Now we find ourselves riding a tandem bike together around the United States for the next year in search of a sustainable community in which to live and thrive. In order to sustain

this new lifestyle, we've used our savings to buy things like a new home (tent) and portable kitchen (a pot, a cup, and a camp stove), and we are creating a unique media project to share what we learn with you as we go.

Many people ask us, "how do you find food?" Well, right now it happens to be dripping off the trees and sprouting out of the earth just about everywhere we go! And the food co-ops are filled with more locally-grown and -made products than ever before. Others

ask, "how do you make money during this time of recession?" Now that we have let go of our belief that the good ol' American dollar is the only form of income available to us, money comes in so many different forms. Sometimes it is a warm bed and shower in exchange for helping build someone's house with them, and often it comes in the form of cash and in-kind donations to our non-profit film project.

Now that we have let go of always needing more and more stuff to create a life together, we find ourselves actually needing less in order to be happy. That's right, scarcity only exists if our wants and needs outweigh the finite resources available to meet these needs. Imagine what happens when we simply adjust our needs and wants! We end up having just what



*We began simply
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*"Where does the
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*We're finding that the
real stuff of life
happens unexpectedly
and organically.*

we need when we need it (and often a little extra!).

Just the other day, one of our sponsors gave us a handful of t-shirts to wear on our journey to help promote them (and just in time might we add...our old t-shirts were getting a little worn out!). Well, as you can imagine, carrying all of your possessions on a bike, we can't take that much with us. Within a week, we were invited to be a part of an environmental sustainability forum and had an opportunity to donate the extras to a group of inner-city youth. Instead of holding onto those extras "just in case," we were able to keep things moving forward, thereby lessening the burden of carrying this stuff, while at the same time creating abundance for someone



Mandy and Ryan stop in at Fresno Cohousing.

else. This is beginning to happen more often than not, with small things like t-shirts and BIG things like relationships and knowledge.

Though we do find ourselves able to find what we need most of the time, there are times we have perceived "setbacks." These have come in the forms of electronic equipment failing, losing a much-needed tool, needing an expensive bike part replaced, or a huge bill coming in at a time when our bank account is low. However, this perceived scarcity is only a setback if we see no lesson to be learned. When we look for a lesson in having to spend money on something unexpected, we see that there is an opportunity for growth in another area of our life. Sometimes a new idea is sparked when an electronic device fails; or, when a huge bill comes in at a time when we don't have much money, we learn to be more patient with our plans. We are then forced to look around at other amazing ways to spend our time right where we are at instead of being upset that our plans have changed.

We're finding that the real stuff of life happens unexpectedly and organically—like this morning, when our friend's child came into our cabin at Avalon Springs community and jumped into bed to wake us up and say hello. We're creating more time for things like this to take place in our lives by letting go of our need for *my* stuff to get done on *my* timeline in *my* space. By remaining open to the abundance available in each moment, rather than sacrificing this presence for



Perceived Setbacks: Breakdowns happen, but graced with a tow!

future needs and wants that don't even yet exist, we're slowly but surely answering the question about what our true needs and wants are. For us, traveling around by bike and living in our tent this year allows us to learn more and grow more than ever before. Perhaps we'll meet you on the road to share more stories and continue to build a more abundant society—you may even score a new t-shirt from us! ❁

Ryan and Mandy are bicycling around the US for a year, documenting their visits to sustainable communities. As two seekers of a more sustainable way of life in community, they decided to share what they learn by making a feature-length documentary film (due out at the end of 2009), blogging on their website, and giving presentations about how to live more sustainably in your existing community. Follow the journey at www.withinreachmovie.com, or contact them at info@withinreachmovie.com if you would like your community to be involved.



For pictures of some of Mandy and Ryan's stops on their journey, see page 78.

Excerpt from Mandy's Blog:

NEEDS ASSESSMENT



SEPTEMBER 3, 2008: Do you believe that you have the power to manifest whatever you need when you need it? Not what you want, but what you need? I've always wanted to do a survey in a third grade class (or with a group of adults) and have each person fill out a "needs assessment" worksheet; basically asking them to write down each and every need that they have in their entire life. Take some time to do this if you wish...and get very specific. For example,

- Toilet paper
- Roof
- Warm blanket
- Love
- Nail clippers
- Etc.

Then, write down the ways in which you could obtain these things, more sustainably (that is, without taking away from future generations' abilities to meet their own needs). There are so many possibilities!

- Toilet paper: 100% recycled from EcoSoft, purchased by the case through a buying club with your neighbors
- Roof: living roof where vegetation is grown
- Warm blanket: second-hand store
- Love: it's all around you, keep your heart open and you'll have it in abundance
- Nail clippers: these can last a lifetime, so just buy a new pair once (look for made in USA) and hold onto them forever

Okay, so the reason this has come up is due to a revelation we had a few days ago when biking toward the Golden Gate Bridge. We set out on the tandem recumbent bike with a small pull-behind trailer through some fairly hilly areas. Later during the day, the chain broke, followed by the derailleur

and a spoke on the rear wheel. Ugh! Not more bike troubles! After having some help from two other bike tourers we met, we walked

the bike a mile to the nearest bike shop to buy new parts. We were running late to a photo shoot and had a hard deadline the following morning that we couldn't miss as well. Thus, we didn't have time to fix the bike and make it to the city on time. On the way to the bike shop, one of us was complaining about the tight schedule and how things were just not working out and admitting that this was inevitably going to happen—they



knew early on that day that the bike was destined to break because it's not a new bike and we were over-working it. The other one of us said, "Please stop. I need to just focus on putting positive energy out toward the bike shop owner to help us and even to store the bike for us while we fulfill our obligations in the city." And of course, that's just what happened! The Village Pedaler in Larkspur, California offered to store the bike and some of our belongings, as well as fix it by the time we returned.

Just what we needed, exactly when we needed it.

—Mandy



Ecologically Speaking Communities

Enright Ridge Urban Eco-Village

By Kate Reidel

We can no longer deny the environmental crisis. While issues such as global warming and rapid species extinction are being accepted as real by science and state, they are but symptoms of the created disease that lies within the web of our culture. In a time when humans have depleted many of the Earth's resources and changed the nature of nature herself, the only thing we can do to begin healing from our mistakes is to begin thinking ecologically. The main question leading our human lives will have to cease being: How much money does it cost; can I make; will I need? Instead, people all over the world are going to have to ask questions like: Where do my major resources like food and water really come from and how are they being poisoned? How can I save resources and look for renewable ways to function in my life? And ultimately, How does this action enhance Earth?

It has been a misconception that humans were created for an economic system of production and consumption. The reality of our existence is that we are simply a part of the larger system of Earth, and economics is just one of the things that we humans do. In addition to the economic

part of our lives, we also practice spiritual, cultural, educational, and political lives, all of which make up the larger dynamics of being human. The anthropocentric world view claims that we are the top of the chain of life, there is nothing that is above



Lemonade stand community style! Residents and friends of Enright make some pocket change.

In an ecovillage, residents take responsibility for their own energy sources, food, and general well-being. Most ecovillages are small-scale, self-sustaining communities aimed at developing alternative ecological, environmental, and cultural standards.

our dominance. By asking how our action enhances Earth, we are shifting to an ecological paradigm that views the Earth as the larger, dominant system that holds our lives, just as it holds all other life on this planet.

When we ask ourselves the big question when it comes to our communities, what is our answer? Do our neighborhoods do more good for the Earth than harm? Do our cities clean more air than they pollute? The answer is that most do not yet, but they should and they will have to if we hope to live in a decent world. Where we live and where we work should be places that contribute to the quality of life on this planet, and they should provide us with a natural ecosystem in which we actively participate as humans. Ecologically-conscious communities are important for stepping into a new cultural paradigm and living as if the Earth mattered.

Ecovillages are one way to design communities with the Earth in mind. In an ecovillage, residents take responsibility for their own energy sources, food, and general well-being. Most ecovillages are small-scale, self-sustaining communities aimed at developing alternative ecological, environmental, and cultural standards. While rural ecovillages have sprung up across the world with success, urban ecovillages are a new concept that we must consider, especially because the human population threatens to destroy many of our natural areas already.

Here in Cincinnati, a community in Price Hill has organized itself to form an urban ecovillage with much success. Enright Ridge Urban Eco-village is a community fostering a sustainable urban neighborhood, which promotes preserving the

planet through social, economic, and healthy lifestyles and which demonstrates urban revitalization utilizing these principles. Our resources are abundant at this location. We are comprised of 90 households located atop a south-facing ridge only seven minutes from downtown Cincinnati. Accessible public transportation enables residents to stay connected to outside communities and resources, and the ridge we live on is surrounded by nearly 200 acres of woods, including a 16-acre nature preserve.

When we began to organize this existing community to raise questions of sustainability and preservation in 2004, residents spoke up about their desire to create a supportive community that actively advocates for their own safety as well as

the safety of the Earth. The Enright Ridge Urban Eco-village was born from a deep concern for the well-being of the entire life community here in Price Hill.

Through many community events, discussions, and interactions, the residents of Enright have formed six committees that are the conduits for decision-making in the village. We have housing, promotions, communications, long-range planning, and green living committees that allow everyone who wishes to participate a fair voice in creating the neighborhood

they desire based on what interests them. We currently have about a third of the residents who participate wholeheartedly, one third who appreciate what we are doing but do not attend many events, and one third of the people do not care either way. As we continue our efforts, more and more residents have become interested and we hope that more people will include themselves in our activities.



Dessert Champion of the annual Neighborhood Chili Cook-off Sandie Lett. To start a tradition, these custom-designed trophies are to be passed down each year from the old winners to the new winners.



Work party at Enright.



Enright Hootenanny.

In the last two years, residents have accomplished many things together which have made Enright Ridge a safer, more beautiful place to live, where residents lead more fulfilling lives. Taking care of the land by picking up trash, growing our own food, and eradicating invasive species has added to our quality of life. A quarterly street-wide newsletter keeps everyone up-to-date with what is going on and also allows neighbors to get to know each other. The promotions committee organized a Home & Garden tour in 2006 that attracted people to visit our community, and is planning another one this year to showcase our progress. The housing committee has saved four houses in foreclosure from being bought by investors, then rehabilitated them using ecological principles and sold them to homeowners interested in learning to live more sustainably. This committee also purchased the apartment building and storefront at the top of the street, rehabilitated it, and rented the space to people interested in the ecovillage. It is now the new home of the Cincinnati Zen Center.

Residents of Enright Ridge Urban Eco-village have done this and much more to reach our goals of shifting our consciousness from an anthropocentric view to an Earth-centered view of life. There have been challenges along the way, including difficulties retrofitting old houses to save energy, pollution of the land from years of abuse, and little control over who moves into the neighborhood. But we have also had many encouragements along the way as well, including support from a financial foundation which lends us money for

the ecovillage at low or no interest, allowing us to accomplish some of the loftier goals like purchasing property. We also received a grant to install rain gardens on the street.

The residents of Enright Ridge Urban Eco-village have done much to reach our goals of shifting our consciousness from an anthropocentric view to an Earth-centered view of life.

Looking into the future, it is not easy to see how we will be able to continue living as consumers of the Earth, especially when resources are drying up and we are affecting the natural cycles of renewal. For Enright Ridge residents, the future is what we look forward to because we see the ability to change within ourselves. People of Enright were all once blind to the destructive behaviors of our society and have made strides in changing our lifestyles to honor the Earth. These actions are what give us

hope for the future, because if we can live as if the Earth is primary, if we can create ecologically speaking communities, humans might just have a shot at saving the world. ❁

A resident of Enright Ridge Urban Eco-village, Kate Reidel is Volunteer Coordinator for the ecovillage and for Imago. Kate has lived in Price Hill for much of her life and is now completing her bachelor's degree in Human Ecology and Education as well as pursuing a Permaculture degree. Her hope is to use this practical knowledge of agriculture, energy, and natural systems theory to live sustainably within the ecovillage while teaching and learning alongside others who have similar interests. Kate is energized by being in the woods, hiking, reading, gardening, music, poetry, and deep conversation.





BY
TREE BRESSEN

When Community Land Is Privately Owned

There tends to be an attitude in the movement that common ownership is inherently superior. I might even agree with that attitude. However, in contrast to the orthodoxy, i've also visited places where private ownership, either temporary or even long-term, seemed to be working out okay.

I became curious: What factors make such a situation go well rather than badly?

When most of us think of intentional community, we think of a place where some or all of the land or property is owned in common. There tends to be an attitude in the movement that common ownership is inherently superior. I might even agree with that attitude. However, in contrast to the orthodoxy, i've also visited places where private ownership, either temporary or even long-term, seemed to be working out okay. I became curious: What factors make such a situation go well rather than badly?

First, let's consider the obvious challenges. Property ownership on the part of some members conveys immediate material privilege. It also tends to influence psychological and interpersonal dynamics considerably. In our socially unjust society, ownership is a form of rank or power-over. Owners get to accrue equity in property, while renters' money just disappears into the void. However, in spite of all that, i still think that if held consciously, and with requisite willingness and skill to have healthy conversations about it, private ownership does not necessarily have to break the sense of community in a place.

When eight of us started Walnut Street Co-op in 2000, we faced a fairly common situation: We all wanted to live in community, but only one person had enough money to buy a house in our town. He went ahead with it, and we

all moved in. The goal all along was to transfer ownership to the group. However, again like many groups, we didn't get around to it for a while. In fact, frankly, we might never have gotten around to it if the owner hadn't decided firmly, after several years, that he wanted out. In the fall of 2002, one night at our weekly meeting, he announced that if we didn't buy the property from him by spring he was going to put it on the market. Whew! While we felt shocked and upset, i have to say that it also lit a fire under our butts. A core group formed, and by dint of much hard work, successfully met the deadline. (For part of the story of how we did it, see "Our Community Revolving Loan Fund" in COMMUNITIES #128, Fall 2005.)

However, what's worth noticing here is that even in the years before the group assumed ownership, the place already felt like a community. I believe that most sightseers could have sat in on nine out of ten meetings without being able to tell that one person owned the



Walnut Street Co-op in Eugene, Oregon: The original building was purchased by one person and converted to co-op ownership three years later.

CHRIS ROTH

house. We all shared in cooking and chores. We all attended meetings. When the house needed work or when

someone was having a hard time, we each did our best to help out, according to individual skills and availability. When a room came open, we all interviewed and selected new housemates by consensus.

The owner laid down the law on one or two things at the beginning, like insisting that no illegal substances be brought onto the property (a guideline that the group later kept, by the way, after the transition to co-op ownership). And that was about it. Aside from that, he held his role lightly, with grace i might even say. So that when we did finally pass from individual into group ownership, the shift was relatively smooth, and changed almost nothing about our day-to-day lives together. The main difference was that the newly formed core group now had extra responsibilities: planning for long-term maintenance, drawing up annual budgets, and making payments to the lenders in our community revolving loan fund. The former owner moved on to other community ventures.

Based on that experience, my visits to other communities, and conversations with other people in the communities movement, i offer the following list of recommendations to help guide owners and tenants who may find themselves in the situation of attempting to form a community while occupying privately owned land. These recommendations are offered in addition to all the other important elements that any forming community benefits from having, like strong friendships and a good



JAN STEINMAN

vibe among everyone living there, and a sense of larger purpose beyond the welfare of individual members.

What helps landowners and tenants attempting community living on privately owned land:

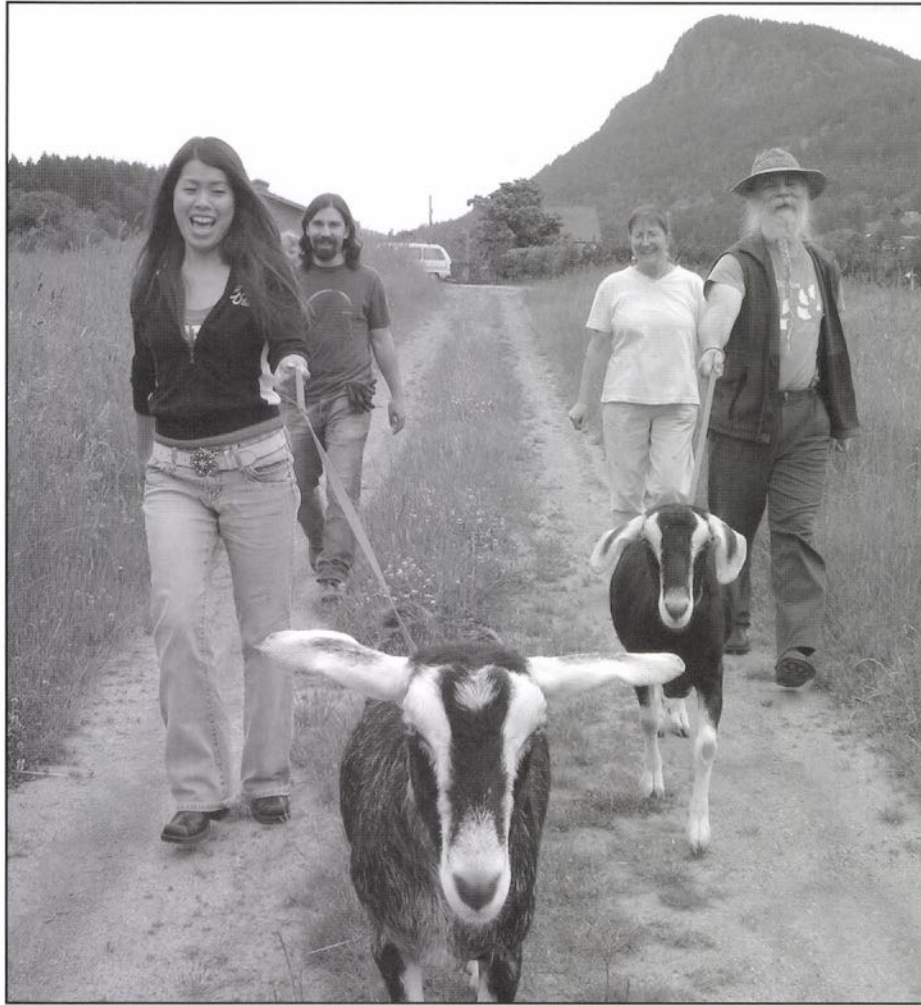
- **Owner being clear and up front about what decisions are up to the group versus what decisions the owner is ultimately maintaining control over.** For example, capital improvement decisions might be up to the owner, while lifestyle choices (e.g., whether the kitchen is vegetarian, or what time do quiet hours start) might be up to the full group to decide. The more clear these agreements are, the better; thus, writing them down helps. The more decisions can be made by everyone, the more likely you are to actually have a community rather than a “feudal lord and serfs” situation; so probably the default should be that decisions are made by all unless there is a strong reason to do otherwise. The owner can still be included as one of the decision-making members, and protecting the owner’s interests is a concern that any member can bring up if it’s relevant to a particular proposal.

- **Clarity of agreements.** For example, having a signed lease, or, if work trade is expected, then specifying how many hours and what’s included. Again, writing down the basics is useful, both

In a unique model on Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, EcoReality Co-Op owns the land and all structures, but members “vest” in individual structures from which they can produce income.



In Oakland, California, Mariposa Grove’s original three buildings, purchased by Hank Obermayer in 1999, were converted to community land trust condominium ownership nine years later.



JAN STEINMAN

The goats were free. Jan and Carol used fuel (and ferry fare) to pick them up, built facilities for them, fed them, and cared for them. Now they are being transferred to community ownership at EcoReality Co-op. What is a fair price?

Even in the years before the group assumed ownership, the place already felt like a community.

situation of moving into someone's established territory.

- **Common spaces controlled by all.** Whose books occupy the shelves of the library? Whose art hangs on the walls? In order for a place to feel like their home, other community members besides the owners will need to have equal influence over furnishings, and ability to have their cherished personal possessions in common space.

- **Owner not being too attached about too many things.** Ooo, this is a tough one, isn't it? It's hard for people to change their personalities, so it's up to owners to be self-aware about this and for other residents to screen for it before choosing to join. I suggest that owners who are more laid back are more likely to succeed in co-creating a happy community around them.

- **Members who are personally reasonably emotionally secure.** We're not demanding perfection here, but the less secure the other residents are, the more likely they are to project concerns and upsets onto innocent owners.

- **Attention, if needed, on other power factors besides ownership** (for example, gender, race, class background, popularity, political alliances, and so on). Being willing to look at the many power dynamics at play reduces inappropriate

because it forces you to get clear and for referring back to later.

- **Which hat when?** There will be times when the owner is speaking as the owner, and wants to be heard that way. However, unless everyone stays pretty conscious, there will be times when the owner is attempting to put out their preferences as one group member, but instead is interpreted by others as dictating by fiat. Many unhappy misunderstandings can be averted by a commitment on all sides to be as clear as possible about which hat the owner is wearing when. If anyone isn't sure in a particular case, they should ask.

- **Transparency.** Openness builds trust. I recommend the owner be entirely open about their title to the land, mortgage payments, and other arrange-

ments, including having open accounting books for the shared property that any community member can examine whenever they want. Potential members should also be realistic with the owner about what they are likely to be able to put into the pot.

- **Simultaneous move-in.** Walnut Street Co-op was blessed in that, because we actually started as a group, everyone initially moved in around the same time. We all talked over who wanted which bedroom, and common spaces were furnished collectively. We were spared the

Have you ever visited a community where the property is supposedly heading toward group ownership, but has been owned by one person for more than a decade?



Mike Nickerson, author of *Life, Money, and Illusion*, discusses local economics in a workshop in an EcoReality Co-op conference space that is community-owned, but the profits from which go to two community members who funded its purchase.

targeting of ownership privilege. In a hierarchical society, we all have situations where we are one-up and situations where we are one-down. It's unfair to expect only the owner to face up to their own one-upness.

- **Trust.** This item was added to the list courtesy of Hank Obermayer, former owner at Mariposa Grove in California. He describes it this way: "Trust that what the owner says is what they mean, both intellectually, and as what they will truly work toward. That has to do with incoming members trusting the owner's maturity, ability, and openness. It can also include the owner's trust of others who are involved in making community decisions that the owner is liable for."

- **Owner letting go of, um, greed, or a desire to achieve mainstream profit margins.** I hear the wail of community owners: "Oh sure, i'd be happy to have group ownership, i just want to be compensated for all the years of work i've put

in on the land," or "As long as others buy in for equal portions," or, worse yet, "As long as others buy in for the amount of money the land is worth now," when the owner bought it years ago when the market was a lot lower. If you can find members who are willing to do that, fine. But otherwise, your attachment to profit is likely to keep you from ever having the community you supposedly want.

At Walnut Street, the founding group fortunately had a conversation about how much the property would be sold for later. While that did not prevent tensions from arising during the final negotiations, it certainly helped provide guidance and made it easier to arrive at agreement. In the end, the group paid an amount that provided significant profit to the owner, while still being significantly under market value at the time of resale.

- **A transition plan to arrive at group**



Mariposa Grove community member with his To-Do list after a community-wide brainstorming meeting.

Common Problems with Private Ownership of "Community" Land

By Jan Steinman

- The people with the most effort to contribute generally are young and have little or no money.
- Past labor is generally not valued at all, or assumed by the owner to have been completely compensated for by free rent or meals.
- Property prices rise faster than tenants' ability to raise money, or even to perform work-trade.
- Banks won't touch mortgages on commonly-held property—at least not at home-mortgage rates. (Business loan rates are considerably higher.) This means the owner must become the banker as well—yet another position of hidden power.
- Unless the parties are essentially equal in net worth, power imbalances will remain in any share-based system. Even in cooperatives that have equal votes or consensus, there is hidden power imbalance if the equity distribution is vastly unequal, which can eventually cause resentment unless great care is taken.
- The day-to-day grind of running the place tends to put equity sharing on the back burner. I know of three sites where the owners have expressed an interest in sharing equity for some years, yet none of them actually have done so. I don't doubt their intentions, but this is an example of "hidden power," in that people of privilege rarely view themselves as such. The "status quo" is good enough for the owner, and the serfs don't want to rock the boat by pestering the owner about following up on the owner's previously expressed intentions. ❁

Jan Steinman is cofounder of Eco-Reality, a forming ecovillage in the Southern Gulf Islands of British Columbia, Canada (www.ecoreality.org).



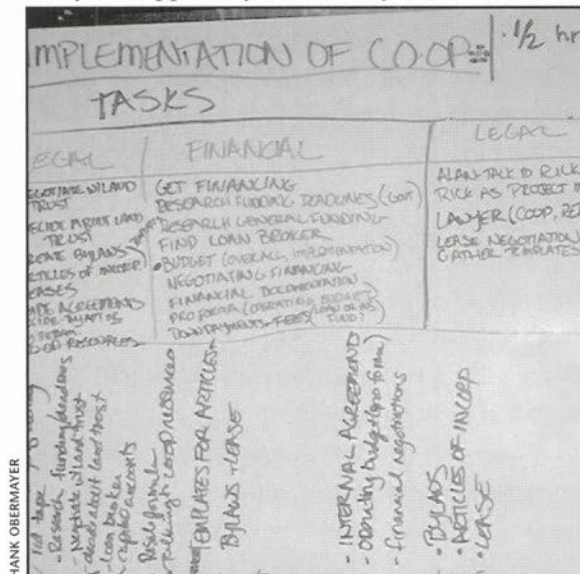
JAN STEINMAN

Group ownership issues arise not just with real estate, but with buildings, temporary structures, vehicles, farm equipment, and even crops. This greenhouse was owned by two community members who moved it to EcoReality Co-op. Now it will be transferred to communal ownership in exchange for co-op shares—fair price to be determined.

ownership. Have you ever visited a community where the property is supposedly heading toward group ownership, but has been owned by one person for more than a decade? There are plenty around. If you really want other people to make a place their home, it'll be more likely to happen if you and they work

out a realistic plan for joint legal ownership. Read the relevant chapters of Diana Leafe Christian's book *Creating a Life Together* for more information on legal options for incorporation and property ownership. And speaking of that excellent book, check out "When You Already Own the Property," on page

23 of the same title, for further perspective on the themes raised here. ❁



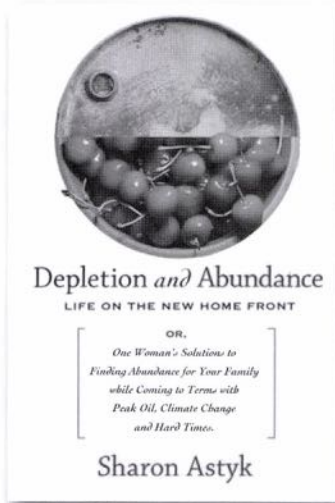
HANK OBERMAYER

Detail of the tasks and timelines whiteboard when Mariposa Grove first thought it was going to become a limited equity housing co-op. The group spent an entire retreat discussing legal ownership structure issues. Says Hank Obermayer: "It's not what we ended up doing, but we went fairly far down that path before changing directions."

Tree Bressen works as a free-lance facilitator and teacher of consensus, facilitation, and group skills for intentional communities and a wide variety of other organizations, centered in the Cascadia bioregion. See www.treegroup.info. After living in intentional communities for most of her adult life, she presently lives in an informal collective household where the property is owned by one resident. (Tree also deliberately uses a lower-case "i" in writing as an expression of egalitarian values.)

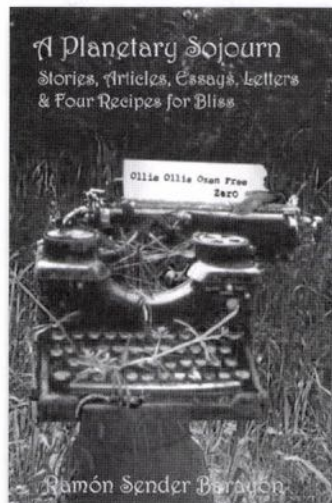
BOOKS RECEIVED

COMMUNITIES staff has not had time to read thoroughly or review any of the books received recently at our offices, but we wish to pass on some titles and short descriptions to those who may want to explore them further. We welcome submissions of book reviews from readers, as long as the books are relevant to COMMUNITIES' general themes and areas of concern—please contact editor@ic.org if you're interested in writing one.



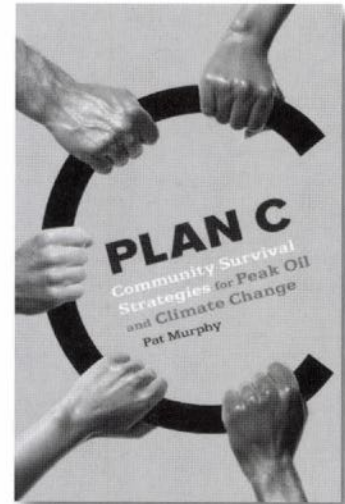
Depletion and Abundance: Life on the New Home Front
(or, *One Woman's Solution to Finding Abundance for Your Family while Coming to Terms with Peak Oil, Climate Change and Hard Times*)
by Sharon Astyk
New Society Publishers,
Gabriola Island, BC, 2008
Pb., 274 pages, \$18.95

"Sharon Astyk has all kinds of suggestions for individuals and families, but never forgets that real resilience lies in working communities." (Bill McKibben, author of *Deep Economy*) "This is a wonderful book about a terrible subject; situation—we're screwed. If it doesn't kill us, the coming depression could be the best thing to happen to Americans in a long time. A marvelously funny, compelling, passionate and practical book about how to survive the hard times ahead, written by a farmer and a mother of four for anyone who loves their family." (Peter Bane, publisher of *Permaculture Activist*)



A Planetary Sojourn: Stories, Articles, Essays, Letters & Four Recipes for Bliss
by Ramón Sender Barayón
Calm Unity Press,
San Francisco, CA, 2008
Pb., 294 pages, \$19.95

Ramón's illuminating, highly entertaining article "Politics on Open Land" (COMMUNITIES #140) appears in longer form in this book. Here's how Ramón puts it: "The purpose/job/whatever-it-is that I'm here to demonstrate is that you can do it all in one lifetime—survive war, bombs, mother's murder, loss of family, abandonment, change of cultures, a weird but privileged childhood, go Bohemian, go Beat, go Zen, go radical Christian cult, screw up as a young adult, experience hand-to-mouth poverty, flounder around ruining relationships, go animist, go hippy, go shaman, go crazy, and still emerge from it all like a pooch staggering out of a tsunami, shaking off all accrued karmic crud and find a joy-filled life with a wonderful wife and three great sons, all of whom allow me the freedom to pursue solar consciousness... Amazing!"



Plan C: Community Survival Strategies for Peak Oil and Climate Change
by Pat Murphy
New Society Publishers,
Gabriola Island, BC, 2008
Pb., 318 pages, \$19.95

Here's what a couple of advance readers of this book have to say: "A revolution is gaining steam here and elsewhere and it's being led by communities that are taking responsibility for their energy futures and food supply while building economies that are fair and sustainable. It's called *Plan C* and the story is told here by one of the intrepid pioneers in the movement." (David Orr, author of *Ecological Literacy*, *Earth in Mind*, *The Nature of Design*, and *The Last Refuge*) "The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer much faster now than at any time in the past. The world is at peak injustice, and that one point, and its ramifications, make *Plan C* essential reading." (Albert Bates, author of *The Post Petroleum Survival Guide and Cook-*
(continued on p. 64)

Scarcity and Abundance on

Community Bookshelf

Readers interested in exploring further facets of our Scarcity and Abundance theme may want to explore the following books, all available from Community Bookshelf (see store.ic.org).

The End of Oil: On the Edge of a Perilous New World

by Paul Roberts
2005; 416 pages;
5.5" x 8.25", paperback;
ISBN 0618562117

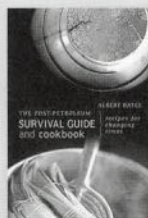
In this frank and balanced book, the author delves deeply into the economics and politics of oil and the effect they have on all of us and our future. He considers in a clear-eyed manner the potential of alternative energy systems such as wind power, hybrid cars, and hydrogen. Brisk, immediate and accessible, this is essential reading for anyone who uses oil, which is to say every one of us.



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

by Albert Bates
2006; 286 pages;
7.5" x 9"; paperback;
ISBN 0-86571-568-8

The Post-Petroleum Survival Guide and Cookbook is a blueprint for moving into a changing energy future. It distills the essentials for small-footprint living, leavened with deep wisdom, a wide variety of wonderful recipes, juicy quotes, and reminders to enjoy life as we power down.



Getting a Grip: Clarity, Creativity and Courage in a World Gone Mad

by Frances Moore Lappe
2007; 208 pages;
8" x 6"; paperback;
ISBN 0-97941-424-5

Getting a Grip is a beacon of hope that serves to remind us that we can all make choices every day that positively impact the communities we live in, both local and global.



Radical Simplicity: Small Footprints on a Finite Earth

by Jim Merkel
2003; 288 pages;
9" x 6"; paperback;
ISBN 0-86571-473-8

Existing work on sustainability, resource justice, and escaping the consumer lifestyle has opened the door to the possibilities of a simpler life. *Radical Simplicity* invites the reader to step through the door and follow the path to realizing the possibilities such a lifestyle change offers.



Passion as Big as a Planet: Evolving Eco-Activism in America

by Ma'ikwe Schaub Ludwig
2007; 219 pages;
9" x 6"; paperback;
ISBN 1-43032-196-2

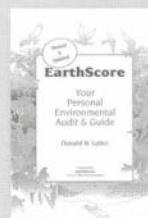
The author of this engaging book gives those wishing to translate their core beliefs to the wider community around them excellent guidance and support. It shows how to combine personal growth and spiritual exploration with social and political activism.



EarthScore: Your Personal Environmental Audit and Guide

by Donald W. Lotter
Revised & updated 2002;
36 pages; 8 1/2" x 11"

Are you curious about the environmental impact of yourself and your household? In this excellent booklet, designed to raise awareness rather than produce guilt, we are presented with questions about impact, given five choices for answers, and then tally our score as we go along. Included are explanations, resources, and lots of helpful information. Thoughtful, well-written, and actually fun and encouraging!

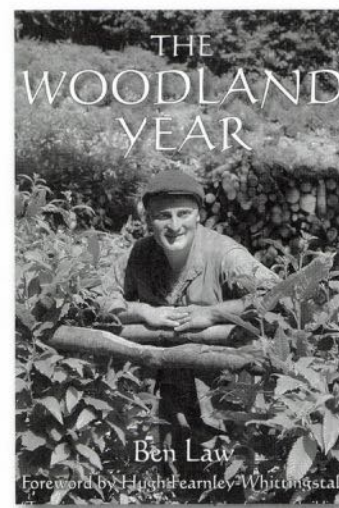


BOOKS RECEIVED

PLAN C

(continued from p. 63)

book) "A tour de force encyclopedia of sustainability." (David C. Korten, author of *When Corporations Rule*) A cursory review reveals a strong influence from the communities movement in this book; in fact, the author thanks the Fellowship for Intentional Community and individuals in the cohousing and ecovillage movements in his opening acknowledgments.



The Woodland Year

by Ben Law

Permanent Publications,
Hampshire, UK, 2008/Chelsea Green,
White River Junction, VT, 2009
Hc., 176 pages, £19.95/\$39.95

"*The Woodland Year* is a month-by-month journey through Ben's woodland in the Sussex Weald, and a celebration of every aspect of sustainable woodland management. In words that are often lyrical but always ungilded, he describes a way of life that is both economically and ecologically viable. As such, it holds some of the fundamental keys to how we can achieve a more sustainable, lower carbon society... Tempting recipes, coppice crafts, timber frame eco-building, nature conservation, species diversity...it's all here." (from the foreword by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall) ❁

REACH

COMMUNITIES WITH OPENINGS



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

You may use the form below to place an ad. **THE REACH DEADLINE FOR ISSUE #142/Spring 2009 (out in March 2009) IS JANUARY 23.**

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: John Stroup, Business Manager, COMMUNITIES, 10385 Magnolia Rd, Sullivan MO 63080; message line: 573-468-8822; email: ads@ic.org (If you email an ad, please include your mailing address and phone number, and be sure to send off the check at the same time.)

Intentional communities listing in the Reach section are invited to visit our online COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY at 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 biannually. Contact: directory@ic.org or 540-894-5798 for more information.

COLUMBIA ECOVILLAGE, Portland, Oregon.

We are a cohousing community with 3.73 acres, including extensive gardens and play areas with existing residential buildings and a common community house. Once completed, there will be 37 condominiums that are renovated for energy efficiency, healthy indoor air and environmental responsibility. Studios, one, two and three bedroom units available. Email: joe@columbiaecovillage.net or see www.columbiaecovillage.com

COMMON GROUND, Jefferson National Forest, Virginia.

Find sacred space: Intentional community of 30 years with cooperative focus on productive large gardens has homesites available, located in picturesque area near college town of Lexington, VA. Live in the quiet beauty of nature in the wooded mountains of the Jefferson National Forest. Seeking young families/individuals of a hard-working homesteading mindset/spirit to add to our small but growing group. Kids welcome. 80 acre land trust, community spring, cold pond, warm swimming pond, pavilion, schoolhouse/visitor's center. Lots of potential for creating a sustainable future. Transitional housing currently available with partial work-exchange possible. Interested visitors contact Glen Leasure at 540-463-4493.

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 natural builders and people with leadership

skills into our community. Help make our ecovillage grow! 660-883-5511; dancingrabbit@ic.org; www.dancingrabbit.org

EARTHAVEN, Blue Ridge Mountains, North Carolina.

We are a 14-year-old multi-generational ecovillage near Asheville, NC. Our mission: to care for people and the Earth and to create and sustain a vital, diversified learning community. We currently have 40-50 members on our 320-acre site, and our goal is to grow to 150 residents. We use permaculture design, natural and green building techniques, drink and bathe in clean water and make our own off-grid power. We nourish our families with organic local foods (our diets range from omnivore to vegetarian) and host a small homeschool enrichment program for members' and neighbors' children. We enjoy an abundant social and cultural life, and make decisions by consensus, but follow diverse spiritual paths. We invite potential new members to write and/or visit, and are especially interested in experienced homesteaders, organic farmers and gardeners, entrepreneurs and folks with managerial skills and experience in the trades. www.earthaven.org; information@earthaven.org; 1025 Camp Elliott Rd, Black Mountain NC 28711; 828-669-3937.



Volunteer in Africa or Brazil

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COMMUNITIES MAGAZINE REACH ADVERTISING ORDER FORM

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

- Communities with Openings
- Communities Forming People Looking
- Internships Resources

Cost: 25¢/wd. to 100 words, 50¢/wd. thereafter.
23¢/wd.-2 inserts, 20¢/wd.-4 inserts. FIC members get 5% discount. Please include payment with submission.
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Please type or print text of ad on separate sheet of paper. Make check out to COMMUNITIES magazine.

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Mail this form with payment (by JANUARY 23 for the Spring 2009 issue) to: John Stroup, Business Manager, COMMUNITIES MAGAZINE, 10385 Magnolia Rd, Sullivan MO 63080; 573-468-8822; ads@ic.org

Expanding your Community?

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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.FellowshipCommunity.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

GLOBAL COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS ALLIANCE, Tubac, Arizona. Founded by Gabriel of Urantia and Niánn Emerson Chase in 1989. Currently 110 adults and children. International members. EcoVillage, green building, sustainable living. God-centered community based on teachings of The URANTIA Book and Continuing Fifth Epochal Revelation (The Cosmic Family volumes). Organic gardens, farm, & ranch. Children’s school, landscaping, Soulistic Medical Institute. Spiritual commitment required. Non-spiritual work-exchange program also. PO Box 4910, Tubac AZ 85646 (520) 603-9932. info@GlobalCommunityCommunicationsAlliance.org; www.GlobalCommunityCommunicationsAlliance.org; www.GlobalChangeMusic.org; www.GlobalChangeMultiMedia.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.

LA’AKEA COMMUNITY, Pahoehoe, Big Island, Hawaii. Come swim in the ocean and drink coconuts with us on our 23 acre tropical farm, practicing permaculture principles. We grow much of our food and host workshops and events. We are part of an island-wide movement to make the Big Island food self-sufficient. We use solar power and filtered rainwater. We make decisions by consensus and practice non-violent communication. Seeking member-owners of all ages and family configurations to share our slice of paradise. www.permaculture-hawaii.com 808-443-4076 or write POB 1071, Pahoehoe HI 96778.

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 MO 63563; visitorscm@sandhillfarm.org; 660-883-5543; www.sandhillfarm.org

SANTA ROSA CREEK COMMONS, Santa Rosa, California. We are an intergenerational, limited equity, housing cooperative 60 miles north of San Francisco. Although centrally located near public transportation, we are in a secluded wooded area beside a creek on two acres of land. We share ownership of the entire property and pay monthly charges that cover the usual expenses of home ownership. We have kept our costs reasonable by sharing all of the responsibilities of our cooperative and much of its labor. All members serve on the Board of Directors and two committees oversee the welfare of the community. We enjoy a rich social life and a mutual concern for the natural environment. Contact: Membership 707-575-8946.

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

VLIERHOF, Kleve-Keeken, Germany. Imagine - there is a paradise and nobody knows about it...We are looking for enthusiastic, strong, new community members for our international community with focus on spirituality, consciousness, peace, community building, healing, self-development and ecology. We need: therapists, trainers, a manager and farmer. Info: www.vlierhof.org.

WHOLE VILLAGE, Near Toronto, Canada. We are a small, well-established ecovillage community ready to expand. We live on a beautiful 190 acre biodynamic farm with poultry, dairy cows and Community Supported Agriculture, and are implementing a permaculture plan. Some of the farm is reserved as wild areas. We provide many volunteer and educational opportunities, but

paid employment only for a farmer. We have designed and constructed a 15,000 square foot coop residence, which is eco-friendly, energy efficient and suited for community life. There is a balance between common and private areas. We follow a consensus decision method and place attention on community dynamics. We are open to diversity in ages, spiritual paths and family styles. We seek energetic, open-hearted people who want to work hard to help create community and live sustainably and self-sufficiently on the land. Apartments are available. www.wholevillage.org 20725 Shaws Creek Rd, Caledon, Ontario, L7K1L7, Canada. info@wholevillage.org

COMMUNITIES FORMING

ECOREALITY CO-OP, Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, Canada. EcoReality Co-op is purchasing 37 acres adjoining 63 acres of community farmland on Salt Spring Island in southwest British Columbia. The combined public/private property has 50+ acres of cleared, irrigated farmland (class 2 soils, zone 8-9), two streams, two ponds, and young forest, backed by public parkland. Members share two big houses as we build tightly-clustered natural homes. We seek new members who can contribute approximately half the value of a typical North

American suburban house to their sustainable future in this project. Prospective members with outstanding skills who can contribute less are encouraged, as well. Contact: Jan Steinman, 250.635.2024, http://www.EcoReality.org/Seeking_members.

SPIRIT SONG 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

TRUE NORTH, Canton, New York. Can't (or don't want to) afford \$250,000 cohousing units or \$50,000 ecovillage buy-ins? Looking for a small rural community with a goal of economic affordability as well as ecological sustainability? Into less sweat gardening in summer and more fun cross-country skiing

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pediatrician Helen Caldicott

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in winter, and being in on the creative beginning of a community venture? Couple with 30 years of living in community and building/alternative energy skills seeks healthy, spiritual, emotionally mature, peak oil aware people, especially those with green building, organic gardening, permaculture, self-sufficiency, group process skills. We steward 35 acres (more can be bought) with fenced fields, decent soil, good firewood, farmhouse and new barn, creek, artesian spring, back road but only 6 miles from towns with four universities. Near Adirondack Park, St. Lawrence River, Ottawa. Made to order nearby Amish wood-sided, metal roof house shells with windows/doors to move onsite for \$4,000. Establishing campsite. Well-behaved dogs welcome. peagreen@earthlink.net 315-386-2609.

COMMUNITY HOUSES AND PROPERTY

NESS COMMUNITY, Russell, New York. Two cabins for sale. One 550 sf, well insulated, two story, post and beam saltbox. New windows, wood siding and paneling, tile kitchen/bath, sawdust toilet, south view over meadow, set up for ac/dc solar, gravity feed water system carried from well, \$12,000. Second, 360 sf, on woods site, two-story, new windows, woodstove, small kitchen, sawdust toilet, set up for solar, carry water from nearby well, \$3,000. Simple living, off grid, homesteading community on 100 acres. Walk in from parking lot on road (can drive when necessary). Canton-Potsdam area has strong alternative community, four universities. Patricia 315-386-2609; peagreen@earthlink.net

Communal Studies Association

Encouraging the study of Intentional Communities

Founded in 1975, the Communal Studies Association publishes *Communal Studies*, a journal covering many aspects of historical and contemporary communal societies with articles and book reviews written by academics, communitarians and preservationists.

CSA hosts an annual conference at various historic and contemporary communal sites. Awards and fellowships promote research and honor those who help achieve a greater understanding of communal living.

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GROUP PROCESS RESOURCES available at Tree Bressen's website. Topics include consensus, facilitation, peace-making, blocks and dissent, community-building exercises, alternative formats to general discussion, the list goes on. Dozens of helpful articles, handouts and more—all free. Contact: Tree Bressen, 541-343-3855; tree@ic.org; www.treegroup.info

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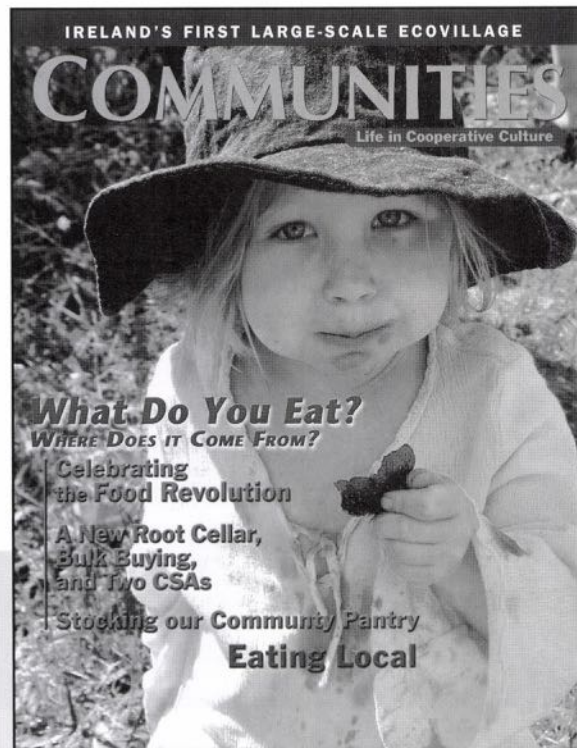
Your source for the latest information, issues, and ideas about intentional communities and cooperative living today!

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Corinne McLaughlin, co-author, *Spiritual Politics*, cofounder, Sirius Community



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INTERNS, RESIDENCIES

SANDHILL FARM, Rutledge, Missouri. Internships in Sustainable Community Living, April 1 to November 1, 2008. 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

PEOPLE LOOKING

COMMUNITY IN MEXICO, on or near beach, already existing or to be created, sought by active retired woman on spiritual path, singer, teacher of music and language, good communicator, international traveler; email: anaazafiro07@gmail.com.

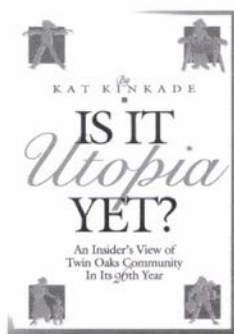
SEEKS COUNTERPART, Hawaii. Single male, 40, at small 13-year-old egalitarian community in Hawaii seeks female counterpart. Parenting. Music. Children's theater. Homestead-based elementary school. Permaculture. Write dkern@coconut-wireless.net.

PUBLICATIONS, BOOKS, WEB SITES

WANT TO LIVE RENT FREE - anywhere in the world? There are empty homes in every state and country, and property owners are looking for trustworthy people to live in them as caretakers and house-sitters! The Caretaker Gazette contains these property caretaking/house-sitting openings in all 50 states and foreign countries. Published since 1983, subscribers receive 1,000+ property caretaking opportunities each year, worldwide. Some of these openings also offer compensation in addition to free housing. Short, medium and long-term assignments in every issue. Subscriptions: \$29.95/yr. The Caretaker Gazette, 3 Estancia Ln, Boerne TX 78006; 830-755-2300; www.caretaker.org, caretaker@caretaker.org

RESOURCES

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

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

Communities, publication #0199-9346, is published 4 times per year with annual subscription of \$24. Contact Tony Sirna 660-883-5545. Publisher's address, office of publication, and publisher's headquarters is Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), Rt. 1 Box 156, Rutledge, MO 63563. Chris Roth is editor. Owner is FIC, a nonprofit, nonstock corporation. No security holders. Tax status unchanged in preceding 12 months.

Extent & Nature of Circulation	Avg. No. Copies Each Issue During Prev. 12 mos.	No. Copies of Single Issue Pub. Nearest to Filing Date
	A. Total No. Copies (Net press run)	3,803
B. Paid and/or Requested Circ.		
1. Outside County Mail Subs.	1,784	1,784
2. Paid In County Subs.	2	2
3. Sales Thru Dealers and other non-USPS paid distribution	1,692	1,735
4. Other classes through USPS	0	0
C. Total Paid Distribution	3,478	3,521
D. Free/Nominal Distribution		
1. Outside County	0	0
2. In County	0	0
3. Other classes mailed thru USPS	0	0
4. Outside the Mail	0	0
E. Total Free/Nominal Rate Distr.	0	0
F. Total Distribution	3,478	3,521
G. Copies Not Distributed	375	375
H. Total	3,853	3,876
I. Percent Paid	100%	100%

POTLUCKS

(continued from p. 48)

Vegetarian and omnivorous eaters find what they need, and new and delightful discoveries are made.

Sometimes there are more deserts, or fruit, or pasta salads, but we always have enough; everyone eats and is satisfied. That's because it's not just about the food. It's about sharing what you have with others and accepting their gifts to you. It is that community feeling that we all long for, here represented in the simple act of eating together.

Sterling Newberry puts it this way: "I like potlucks for two reasons. One is the connection with my fellow Daybreakers. I treasure the time to be together and get to know each other better. The other is food. Each time, I wonder what people will bring, and I enjoy tasting their creations. The first nourishes my soul and the second my body. It doesn't get any better than that!"

Terri Huggett, a founding member of Daybreak, says, "I personally see offering food to others as a sacred act of offering life and love. The image of large family meals shared happily and noisily is conjured up for me whenever we eat together."

We have an annual Indian Feast potluck celebrating an event some three years ago when a group of friends eating at an Indian restaurant in Portland decided to launch an intentional community. Daybreak Cohousing was born. Members gather together to prepare and cook Indian foods. Then we enjoy the feast as we celebrate the anniversary of our founding.

Another food gathering that has become an annual event is the holiday cookie bake. Members and friends bring ingredients and pans and create all manner of holiday treats. This is a great family affair.

Because we value this eating time together, one of our celebration rituals for new members in our community is the presentation of a personalized apron. The recipient receives the apron from his or her buddy, an older member who

has been a mentor through the membership process.

Sara Hamill, a new member, sees this apron as much more than just useful attire in the kitchen. "It was my buddy saying to me 'I see you and I have begun to know you and I look forward to growing into a deeper relationship with you.' It was just a taste of what is possible in the future with the larger community."

The apron is decorated with designs and symbols which hold meaning for the new member. Occasionally, we all don our aprons, symbolizing our sharing of food and our lives together.

At Daybreak our potlucks have become a metaphor for community. As we share what we have of our food, we are also sharing our lives. As the scarcity of individual offerings becomes a feast, so our individual lives become abundant and rewarding in the richness of our community. ❀

Ken Cameron-Bell is a teacher who moved to Portland, Oregon from Asheville, North Carolina in 2007 to help build Daybreak Cohousing, an intentional community. He believes that communities are natural extensions of ourselves and we are not happy unless connected. Ken is also active in his church and his local library. He enjoys cycling, traveling, and zydeco dancing.

BUSINESS MANAGER

(continued from p. 10)

COMMUNITIES is a forum for sharing, and whether you send us a quick letter-to-the-editor, a sketch, or an extensive article, you are contributing to this forum in a way that enriches it. (Even those articles we don't have room to publish contribute to the evolution of each issue.)

You may be able to think of other ways to help this magazine grow and thrive. Please share your ideas and experiences with us. Thanks again for being part of this magazine's community of readers and contributors, and we look forward to helping craft its future together with you. ❀

—John Stroup

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ECOBARRIOS

(continued from p. 30)

challenge is to implement ecotechnologies on a housing development of 222 houses for a low-income population. We are already negotiating with the community a menu of several ecotechnologies which will be paid for through a credit assigned to each home by the Institute of Housing (INVI).

The Secretary of Environment is studying the Ecobarrios project. We have requested financing from her for the first stages of the project in the settings of the Río Magdalena and Santa Rosa Xochiac. Also, the Secretary of Urban Development and Housing (SEDUVI), through the Institute on Housing (INVI), is soon to assign us as Counselors on Sustainable Housing for the low-income population.

Another interesting achievement is the following: as part of a program to improve housing, the INVI is requiring a group of 200 architects to enroll in our Sustainable Housing Educational Program with our faculty of teachers, who specialize in Permaculture and Natural

Construction, Rain Water Catching Systems, Ecological Toilets and the Closing of Cycles, Solar Water Heaters, People's Aesthetics, etc. The first group of 30 architects has already graduated from this program.

We live in a time in history when information is the most precious resource. In February 2007, the United Nations made a worldwide call for us to take personal responsibility when dealing with the issue of Global Warming. Responsibility to act lies not only with the governments and businesses of every country, but it also lies with each one of us. But how are we to go about fulfilling our responsibility to the Planet?

Spreading information about the solutions to our environmental problems through environmental education could be a first step. The second step is dreaming the solution. The third step is the action to make that dream real.

Sustainability is our goal. And together we will all learn that real abundance comes from the water and rain, from the sun and the wind, and from food growing in our backyard. ✿

The Dream

*I see the city surrounded by mountains covered with green
Forests and bushes, and water clean
I see nature's inhabitants, big and small
Flying and leaping, running and crawl
I see an urban cloud no more
Just children playing by the river shore
I see houses of cob and color
And the feeling of joy in every neighbor
I see people living in harmony with nature
Mother Earth saying take care of me and I will nurture*

Noelle Romero was born in Mexico City in 1953 from a North American mother and a Mexican father. She has studied in Mexico City and at the University of Kansas, where she received a B.A. in Psychology and Human Development and an M.A. in Human Development. She was a member of the Faculty of Psychology in the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, then a social worker in the Mexican Fishing Bureau, coordinating a social economic study of three fishermen communities in the State of Quintana Roo. She has been married (now divorced), raised two children, and worked as a painter and a Mayan Calendar teacher. Two years ago she joined Organi-K and began the Ecobarrios project, which now is flourishing in several areas of Mexico City.

ALL WE HAVE IS ALL WE NEED

(continued from p. 25)

I also have learned my greatest gifts: acceptance and compassion. I have gained an understanding that abundance, wealth, and richness mean different things to each person. I now recognize that we all have deep feelings about these topics that are sensitive and connected to some of the deepest primal parts of our selves. And I understand that throughout time, people will continue to evolve and learn more and more what the gifts of life mean to them.

Just yesterday I received an article sent to me from my grandmother. The article was about a research project that studied the top four areas of the world where people live to be the oldest on the planet. To my surprise, one of the areas is just north of True Nature, in a village similar to La Florida. The scientist interviewed one of the oldest women of the village, who was 100 years old. He asked, "What is the secret to living such a long and healthy life here in such a



Costa Rican neighbors Vivian and Heytel painting a mural in the main house.

simple village?" She answered, "Oyeee... I am blessed." It is my wish that no matter what life gives us, we can realize that we are all, in our own unique ways, truly blessed. ❁

Joshua is an educator, facilitator, and consultant, whose mission is to support people interested in exploring and learning about the many facets of living in community. He is the co-founder of the True Nature Community and Education Center (truenaturecommunity.org) in Costa Rica and the CREER Service Organization (creerbelieve.org). Through his work he hopes to help people discover how they can create ways of holistic living filled with connection, support, and interdependence. When Joshua is not living in Costa Rica he resides in Asheville, North Carolina, where he is the coleader of the Asheville Communities Network (ashevillecommunitiesnetwork.com). For more information, contact Joshua: Joshua@truenaturecommunity.org.

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RELATED BACK ISSUES

THEME:

Scarcity and Abundance



Readers interested in delving further into our current Scarcity and Abundance theme may want to explore some of COMMUNITIES' back issue catalog. The issues below speak to this theme in various ways, as do others not listed here (see communities.ic.org/back_issues/ for a complete list of back issues and ordering information). You may also order back issues (\$5 apiece plus shipping) using the form on page 43.

#136 (Fall 2007)

Is Beauty Important?

#133 (Winter 2006)

Helping Your Local Economy Thrive

#130 (Spring 2006)

Peak Oil and Sustainability

#126 (Spring 2005)

The Arts in Community

#121 (Winter 2003)

Thriving in Community

#119 (Fall 2003)

Right Livelihood in Community

#116 (Fall-Winter 2002)

Can We Afford to Live in Community?

#115 (Summer 2002)

The Heart of Sustainability

#98 (Spring 1998)

Values, Vision, and Money: Manifesting Our Dreams

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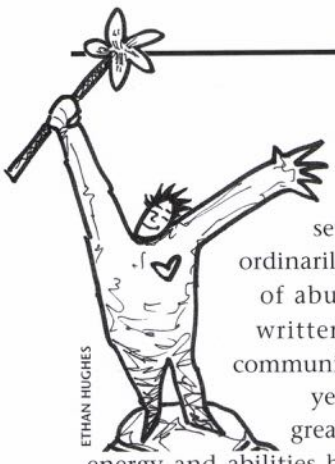
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AS IS: SECRETS TO HAVING ENOUGH

(continued from p. 42)

This article was not written in a setting that would ordinarily be seen as one of abundance. It was written within a new community, less than two years old, that was greatly stretching its energy and abilities by merely maintaining itself. Yet, during the formulation of these words, we found abundance enough to host 30 visitors, and have hosted over 500 since the project began. I myself was experiencing scarcity of time and energy, yet one creative act changed everything: opening up to the abundance that was right in front of me, which I could not find at first. With so many beautiful minds and hearts to draw from, I instantly passed from a feeling of

scarcity to abundance. I offer these words as evidence of that abundance, and proof of the possibility of transcending scarcity. ❁

Special thanks to Karen Lefer, Anthony Kesler, Christian Shearer, John Heyde, Vincent, and Katrina Gimbel for contributions to this article, and to everyone whose contributions have helped make the Possibility Alliance a continuing reality.

Ethan Hughes likes to juggle, sing with birds, and jump into cold bodies of water. One of his favorite activities is still free: laughing. Les Stitt enjoys foraging for wild edibles, hanging out with one-and-a-half-year-olds, acting out Monty Python skits while cooking, and swimming by starlight. Contact them at The Possibility Alliance, 28408 Frontier Ln, La Plata MO 63549, 660-332-4094.

COMMUNITY 101

(continued from p. 11)

from urban poor, to suburban and rural middle class, to quite well-heeled. Not surprisingly, there is a prevalence of nuclear families, single-parent families, and singles...roughly proportionate to what you'd find in the mainstream.

Although there's a full range of ages among the people living in communities—from newborns to those well into their 90s—that diversity does not numerically reflect the demographics of the mainstream. Instead, there is a disproportionate representation of people in the 25- to 50-year-old age range, with the balance skewed toward the older end. Likewise, many cultures and ethnic groups are represented in North American intentional communities, but the well-educated white middle class is represented in proportions greater than in the mainstream. ❁

Interested in writing or illustrating for COMMUNITIES?

Check out communities.ic.org/submit.php for guidelines and future themes.

"In Community, Intentionally" will continue in our spring issue.



The Federation of Egalitarian Communities

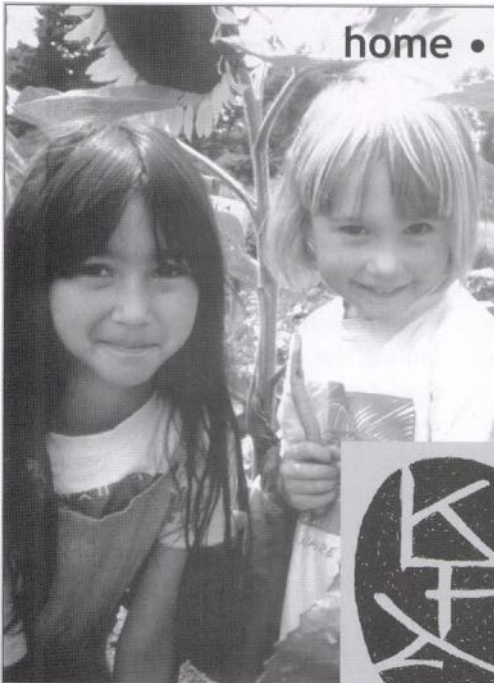
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The Federation of Egalitarian Communities is a network of communal groups spread across North America. We range in size and emphasis from small agricultural homesteads to village-like communities to urban group houses.

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TAKING THE SCARE OUT OF SCARCITY

(continued from p. 37)

a long time. I talked to my friend about her neighbors, and she knew only a couple of them by name. She had a certain kind of community scarcity that simply doesn't exist in intentional community. At the same time, she had a heap plenty of stuff, and heaven knows her water worked every time she turned the tap.

It occurred to me then that we all have to choose which scarcity we want, and how simple we want our lives to be. By eliminating the striving for social recognition on a broader scale, folks in ecovillages have opened the space to reach and touch and love each other, faults and all, on a very small scale. Sometimes the struggle itself can be the reward, because it means that people care about each other's feelings.

I'll try to keep that idea in mind this winter, as the kids button up their overcoats and learn to write essays while shivering. And I'll tell them, Kids, we are so lucky. Look, we know each other's names, each other's favorite things. We're shivering here as the morning dawns, but look. We radiate so much love. ❁

Since completing this article, Kiesa has stopped teaching and started writing full-time. She also owns a retreat for writers in the Midi-Pyrénées region of France near Toulouse, at www.oleandercottage.com.

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FREE TO SERVE
(continued from p. 51)

just be helpful in some other way needed by the generous givers. When living within an economy based on joyful giving, two doesn't always equal two, but instead we are freed to give equal to the immense gratitude we feel upon receiving a gift from the heart.

Freed to Serve

I volunteer between eight and 20 hours a week for Cottage Grove's low-powered community radio station KSOW, often doing the small and mundane things that just need a body and half a brain to complete. I do this joyfully because it contributes to the larger community project, the radio station needs it, and I enjoy music. I have the time to volunteer largely because my needs are efficiently satisfied by an abundant community. The community has freed me to serve the community. I'm not strapped with the high everyday costs of my low-income brethren, but have fortunately marginalized, with the power of community, the need for US currency in my life. I work between 10 and 20 hours a week for bread money, most of which goes to food and the bus remodeling project. This abundance of time has allowed me to explore those things which make me feel most alive. And an economy that helps people come alive is an economy we desperately need. ❁

After spending almost two decades in the sprawling suburban sameness of an East Coast Jungle Gym, Chris Foraker escaped to the West where, fleeing the persistence of a quarter-life crisis, he found refuge in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains. That's where he currently resides. In a school bus.

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**More photos from
Mandy and Ryan's
search for community**

(continued from p. 54)

Right: A group photograph of Laguna Farms in Sebastapol, California, Mandy and Ryan's first stop. As a CSA, Laguna Farms has been providing organically grown produce to the Sonoma County area for more than 20 years.



ALL PHOTOS: RYAN MILYARCZYK



Far left: A sign on a garden gate at Emerald Earth in Mendocino County, California—for inspiration before heading in to garden.

Left: Portable drinking bottle Emerald Earth style—a glass container and leather pouch replace plastic and metal bottles and their harmful byproducts.



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BACK PAGE
(continued from p. 80)

society, then we need to have a system that matches this longing. My experience living in and working with functional consensus-based groups has given me a glimmer of hope that we can develop a system that is truly cooperative and inclusive. And if we want it on a large scale, I think we have to practice it in the smaller circles of our social change groups, businesses, communities, and even our families. Until we are in the practice of listening for the wisdom in other people's ideas or the value of their contribution, we won't be able to do it when it really counts.

And for me "when it really counts" means when we have a conflict with a loved one, when we have big decisions to make as a family, when the groups we care about are conflicted and struggling with what we want to give to the world, when we have major policy decisions as a nation, and, ultimately, on the largest of scales, when we are contemplating war.

These moments matter, and we have to be dedicated to learning the skills of doing them better, with more compassion, collaboration, and creativity.

Here are a few things to try (which, when done with stealthy compassion and without the knowledge of the people around you, can be called "Guerilla Consensus"):

1) When someone offers an opportunity to disagree (a phenomenon sometimes called "picking a fight"), try listening for what their perspective can add to yours, rather than hearing the differences as invalidating or hostile.

2) Have a values conversation before you start problem solving. Once you know what a good solution needs to include (the values), then you can look for solutions that will fulfill them. If you start with problem solving, it's easy to devolve into conflict, because you haven't taken the time to get clear about what's really important to everyone in the group, and half solutions tend to double the conflict.

3) When two people are in conflict, assume the attitude of being everyone's

ally. Help bridge the two positions by looking for what they have in common or what is interesting about each. Taking sides only sticks people in their rigid perspectives; consensus is all about getting mentally flexible enough to take in everyone's good thinking.

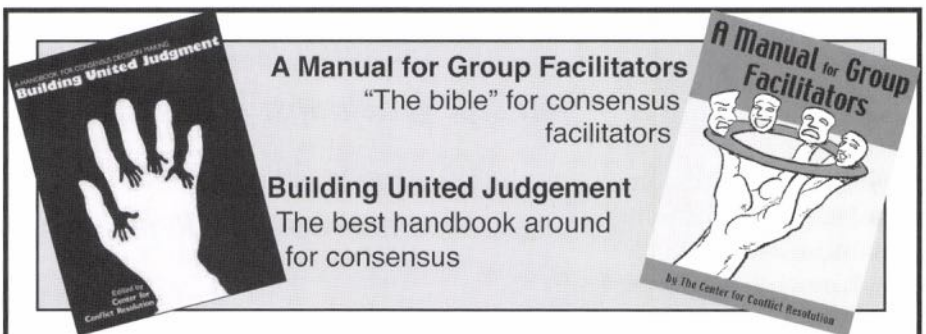
Like many others, I've been inspired during the most recent round of elections to see cracks forming in the veneer of politics as usual. While we are still far from consensus, having a major political candidate in Barack Obama whose background is grounded in community organizing has opened up the possibility that, if we are ready as a people, we can indeed connect across lines that have formed from years of hostility reinforced by our two-party system.

For me, the best we can do now is to work diligently on learning the skills to be able to meet that challenge in wider and wider circles. Eventually (we find ourselves hoping over that beer) we will have

enough people who really understand consensus to change not just our culture but the world as a whole. ✿

*Until we are willing to
move beyond win-lose,
our political system
will fail to engage the
imagination, hearts,
and loyalties of the people
it is meant to serve.*

Ma'ikwe Schaub Ludwig teaches consensus-inspired facilitation with her husband, Laird Schaub, and workshops on sustainability and starting communities. She lives at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage and is the author of Passion as Big as a Planet: Evolving Eco-activism in America. Ma'ikwe chairs the Fellowship for Intentional Community's events team, and (in her own words) is usually the chick up at the mic during FIC events.



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Why America Needs Consensus

By Ma'ikwe Schaub Ludwig

Editor's note: On this issue's back page, we take a look back, from yet another angle, at last issue's Politics in Community theme. (For next issue's back page, we invite further thoughts on our current Scarcity and Abundance theme.)

When my husband and I get to talking about world peace over a beer, the conversation usually revolves around consensus. Although it has a bad rap in some circles, consensus at its heart is a way of being that can lead to understanding what real peace is all about, and to embodying skills that could literally save the world.

For the past 12 years, I've been blessed to live in intentional communities, those social laboratories where lots of decisions get made and lots of conflict presents itself for resolution. Unlike the larger political system that we find ourselves in as Americans, decision-making in a community is intimate: we know each other personally, we talk directly with each other about what's important to us, and we know something of the challenges, joys, and interests of each person we live with. You do a lot of living in a community, and if you are lucky enough to live with people you like, a lot of bonding.

You also do a lot of meetings, and unless you are a process junkie (like me, I confess) this is one of the downsides of community. It sometimes feels like every day is election day, with that level of emotional intensity attached to the outcomes of decisions that are, after all, quite a bit closer to home than the White House.

I've heard people say that the keys to satisfying democracy are high voter turnout and a better-educated populace. And yet my experience living in high-participation, democratic, one-vote-per-person groups where people are very well versed in the issues has been that the same dynamics that are so crazy-making about national politics happen on this smaller scale. The most careful of groups excepted, you

The same dynamics that are so crazy-making about national politics happen on a smaller scale in community. You still get camps, hostilities, and massive projections not unlike those of the Democrats and Republicans.

still get camps, hostilities, and massive projections not unlike those of the Democrats and Republicans.

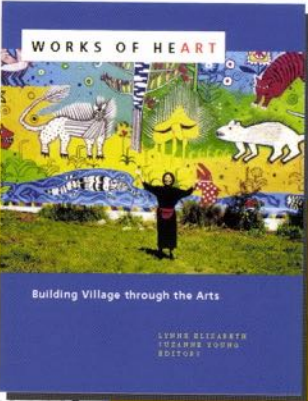
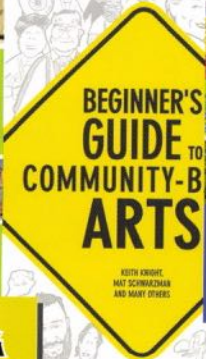
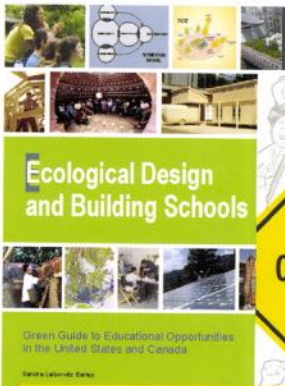
Without an ethic built into the system that says we are expected to work together for everyone's benefit, "well educated about the issues" can translate into having more sophisticated ways to feel righteous and beat up on each other. "High participation" can translate into divisiveness as a recreational sport; the more involved you are, the more opportunities to argue with your neighbors, and the less downtime anyone can get from the constant bickering and social maneuvering. At its worst, it is Junior High all over again.

Every time a vote is tallied (other than one that would have yielded an easy consensus in the first place), some people are going to experience disempowering loss. This means that we are building a culture around the message that political process equals loss. It is not surprising that people seem to prefer checking an impersonal, passion-free box over exercising our real voices; the stakes are lower when our hearts aren't engaged and the losses matter a lot less. But in the final analysis, what we've done is taken something rich with potential to multiple our creative capacity and substituted a game that is not much fun to play.

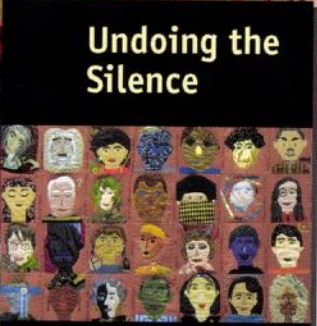
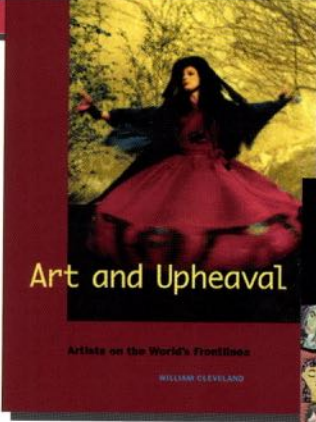
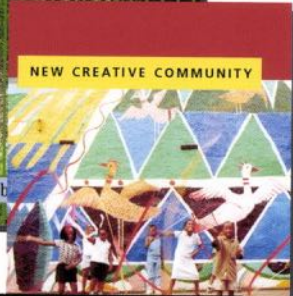
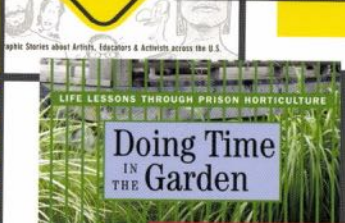
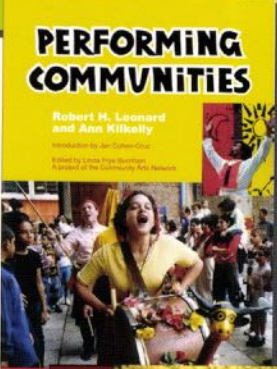
Divisiveness is perhaps the biggest problem we face politically. I don't believe that vote-based democracy is the best we can do (despite international political propaganda that makes American decision-making out to be the Holy Grail). I believe, in fact, that until we are willing to move beyond win-lose, our political system will fail to engage the imagination, hearts, and loyalties of the people it is meant to serve. When every vote means the risk of losing, it's hard to relax and enjoy the process, and harder still to resist the adrenaline rush of defensiveness and competition.

If people want to feel heard, empowered, and excited about civil

(continued on p. 79)



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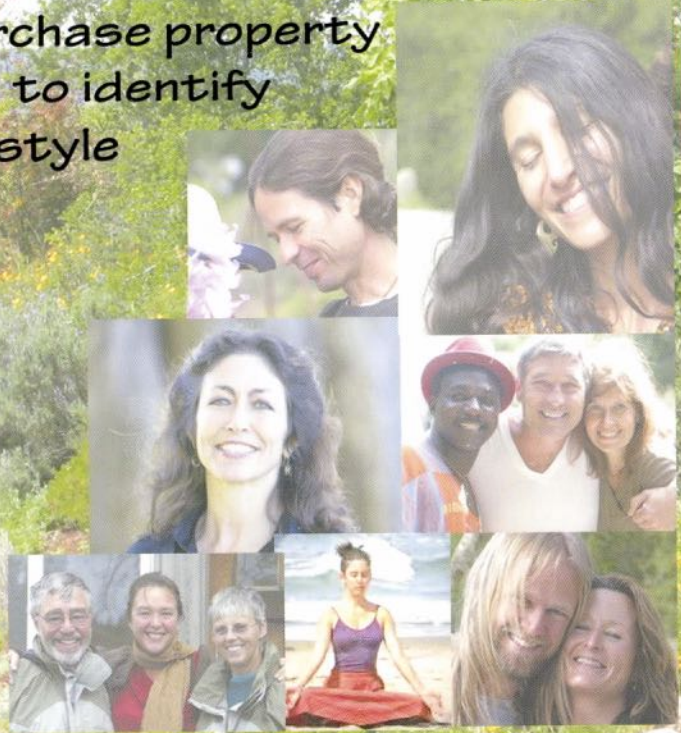
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