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Life in Cooperative Culture

Health and Well-Being

Garden as Therapist

Embracing a Terminal Illness

Shakers' Secrets of Longevity

Cell Phones and Mental Health

Healing, Quiet, and Community



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This image was captured on the Pacific Coast of Costa Rica during a retreat entitled "Creating Community: A Holistic Approach," held at the True Nature Community and Education Center. Students form silhouettes during an expressive movement exercise at sunset on the beach.



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Hello to all at COMMUNITIES,

Or should I say “Hola,” “Salut,” or “Guten Tag,” as I am writing to appreciate the increase in international coverage I have noticed in recent issues of the magazine. Reading about communal and cooperative ventures in other countries provides a diversity of perspective, and helps to strengthen our connections with each other as alternative planetary citizens. As a non-American who has lived communally in the US for 17 years, I appreciate this breath of fresh international air!

In cooperation,
Valerie Renwick-Porter
Twin Oaks Community
Louisa, Virginia

Diversity Overrated

In the Fall 2009 issue, #144 (Letters), Shawn Harris bemoans the lack of diversity and equality in the typical intentional community. Racial and cultural diversity is unimportant to me. I would like the neighbors to be friendly and helpful. I would prefer they not be crazy, high maintenance, drunk or drugged up, or into personal drama. They do not have to be diverse.

The only thing that would make me unhappy to live in a 100 percent White bread, far-right Libertarian intentional community is a near compulsive need to argue politics. For that reason alone, I would enjoy some degree of diversity. Otherwise, as a Libertarian, I would like to see a Diverse assortment of communities: some all White, some all Black, some Latino, some Rainbow Row as Ms. Harris prefers. All of these possibilities, as well as cultural, religious, or politically-focused intentional communities are just fine by me. In the end, it is the practical, frugal, neighborly aspects of community that interest me. Call it the merits of one ladder and one lawnmower vs. 30. Cheap living, someone to play cards or music with—and another slice of pie; THAT IS COMMUNITY. Just not as interested in Diversity, Process, or Consensus as I am the pie. The cook can be of any race. The quality and diversity of the pies is of more immediate interest to me.

George Burnett
Spartanburg, South Carolina

How Else Collaboration Falls Short

I enjoyed the article “How Collaboration Falls Short” by Laird Schaub in the Fall 2009 issue of COMMUNITIES. The reasons listed are certainly among those that can cause collaborations to fail. However, the most common reasons in my experience were not listed, these being:

1) Lack of relevantly skilled personnel. If there are not enough people and/or they don't have the right skills for the job, little can be accomplished.

2) Lack of respect. If other collaborators do not listen to the person(s) who knows how to do what it is they're doing, things will go wrong. Also, people get frustrated and quit when they feel that nobody is listening to them—especially



LETTERS

if they are blamed for the resulting mishaps.

3) Separation between responsibility and authority. A collaboration will fail if the person(s) expected to do a job, or see that it gets done, does not have the power to obtain and distribute the necessary materials, personnel, and other resources. This often results in much frustration and tension, as well as project failure.

4) Burnout. If one or a few people wind up doing most or all of the work, they tend to wear out. Also, people often become resentful if they are contributing more than their fair share of work, resources, etc.

In order to work effectively, a collaboration requires an adequate supply of people, skills, and materials for the chosen project; willingness and ability to cooperate fluently; and an equitable division of tasks in which people have the authority to ensure that things indeed get done.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Barrette
Charleston, Illinois

An Invitation to Communal Studies

Thank you for your continued efforts in bringing community, both the idea and the practice, to the widest possible audience, in an engaging and visually-pleasing way.

Three years ago I was fortunate to attend the International Communal Studies Association Conference, hosted by the fascinating community of Damanhur, in northern Italy. ICSA is essentially an organisation which brings together academics that research com-

munity. As a member of an intentional community, it was fascinating to meet researchers from all over the world that could give an outsider's perspective on what we, the community dwellers, are trying to do. However, their conferences are also attended by members of communities, although more often than not these people are also there to present a paper or run a session. Meeting others who are dealing with similar dilemmas to my own in their day-to-day lives was a priceless experience—especially with people who are living on the other side of the world, and yet we share so much.

As I read the Call for Papers for the next ICSA conference, taking place in Israel next summer (kibbutz.haifa.ac.il), I started thinking about how I can encourage more people who live in community to come to the conference too. There will be a pre-conference tour to the first kibbutz, Degania, celebrating its 100th birthday this year, and visits and meetings with the new wave of communities that are today flourishing in Israel, communities of young people living in the cities, involved in societal change, mainly through education.

One of the ideas that I am exploring is to create an international forum of people living in community, that will meet at some point during the ICSA conference, under the umbrella of The International Communes Desk, which is already an established NGO for international cooperation and information sharing between communities. I'd like to create a type of FIC/FEC network, but of international intentional communities.

At this stage I don't have it all planned out—I want input from others from the earliest stage possible.

I'd be grateful to receive responses to this idea, and any suggestions that may further enable us to share and create on an international level. *C.A.L.L.*, the magazine of the International Communes Desk, is an established platform for intentional communities the world over, but how wonderful would it be to create a face-to-face forum in parallel?

Warm regards,
Anton Marks
International Communes Desk
www.communia.org.il
Migdal Haemek, Israel

Editor's note: I attended the annual North American conference of the Communal Studies Association for the first time this year. Held at Oregon's Old Aurora Colony, October 1-3, it focused on the theme "From Eden to Ecotopia" and featured a rich mix of presentations, discussions, and tours of that 19th-century community. I had an experience similar to Anton's, and echo his encouragement to other communitarians to attend these conferences. Academics researching intentional community can learn a tremendous amount from past and present community members in attendance, and communitarians can gain valuable perspectives from hearing about other communities, both historic and contemporary. My favorite session was a panel discussion in which four of us communitarians talked about membership issues in community and fielded lots of questions from curious academics, reinforcing my impression that we all have much to teach one another. Next year's CSA Conference, focused on "The Architecture of Community," will take place in New Harmony, Indiana, September 30-October 1, 2010 (see www.communalstudies.info). ❀

We welcome reader feedback on the articles in each issue, as well as letters of more general interest. Please 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!

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.

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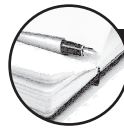
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What is an “Intentional Community”?

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



PUBLISHER'S NOTE BY LAIRD SCHAU



Lessons from the Orchard A PEACH of a Health Care Plan

The theme of this issue is Health and Well-Being. Two decades ago, the Federation of Egalitarian Communities (FEC) had an idea about that which proved to be an excellent example of cooperation, self-reliance, and vision. I want to tell the story of PEACH (Preservation of Equity Accessible for Community Health), which is the FEC's self-insurance program.

The Federation started squirreling away money in October 1986 (at the modest rate of \$10 per person per month) with the idea that when the fund got big enough they'd reimburse participating communities for major medical expenses.

It was a good idea on several levels:

1. Nobody liked insurance companies and this plan offered the promise of meeting health care needs without regularly kissing goodbye to premiums that padded the bottom line of commercial carriers (or

waiting for a Democratic President who could sell a reluctant Congress on the wisdom of national health care).

2. It was practicing cooperation among cooperators, taking our core commitment to another level. It's one thing to throw a party together or do a joint conference; it's another to maintain a common fund upon which everyone's security depends. This was practicing what we preached.

3. When the money wasn't needed for its primary purpose—reimbursing major health care expenses—it could be used as a loan fund to support land acquisition, business start-ups, and expansion of facilities. Unlike payments made to commercial carriers (premiums are gone forever, whether you have a claim or not), payments to PEACH were still in our control, allowing us to do interesting and value-aligned things with how we invested the money.

4. The timing was right. The FEC was

After 23 years, PEACH now has assets exceeding half a million dollars and has paid in full every claim it's fielded.

then 10 years old and its member communities had been around long enough to evolve beyond hand-to-mouth economics (meaning we could afford to set aside money at all), yet young enough to not have gotten used to buying insurance that wasn't required by law—which meant we didn't have to talk a community into foregoing safety they had gotten used to, to take a chance on PEACH. Further, our collective population was relatively young, and we didn't expect to need the fund much in the early years, allowing it to fatten up before it was needed in earnest.

Not knowing much about insurance, we pegged the contribution level and the deductible (\$5000 per person per incident) on a policy then being offered through Co-op America. While Co-op America ceased offering that policy shortly after it was introduced (because it didn't make money), we blithely continued what we'd started, and didn't alter how much we asked groups to cough up each month until this year. (It rose to \$12.50/month last July and will go to \$15/month in January.)

While it may not have worked for Co-op America, it's worked fine for the Federation. Are we lucky? Probably. Yet there is truth in the old Branch Rickey* quote: "Luck is the residue of design."

We have two enormous advantages that elude the mainstream, and we've not been shy about taking advantage of them. First, intentional community is a healthy place to live. People get sick less and heal faster when surrounded by people who care about them. On top of that, we tend to work at home, eat a healthy diet featuring homegrown food, and recuperate in our own beds on those occasions when we get sick. Thus, we have far fewer claims than you might expect, and that's by design.

Second, we restrict what we reimburse

to treatments with a reasonable prospect of enhancing quality of life, which means we don't cover heroic measures (such as keeping someone on life support after brain activity has ceased). We also eschew cosmetic surgery (no nose jobs), and have a healthy dose of skepticism about the efficacy of allopathic treatments in general (Western medicine is great for broken bones, yet more suspect when it comes to cancer protocols), and all of this helps keep a lid on costs.

Sometimes we qualify for low-income price breaks, and sometimes bills are covered by family members with deep pockets. PEACH is the fund of last resort, and it steps in only after all other avenues have been examined. At the end of the day, PEACH covers about 200 people and handles an average of one claim per year.

In 23 years of operation, PEACH has brought in more money than it's paid out in all but two years, steadily growing its net worth. After launching with little more than a bright idea in 1986, PEACH now has assets exceeding half a million dollars and has paid in full every claim it's fielded. It's a pretty good story.

Over the years PEACH has become something of a market maker in loaning to cooperatives. Rather than focusing on the stock market and socially responsible investments, PEACH has slanted its investment strategy to helping groups who share Federation values. More than 80 percent of its assets are loaned out to communities and cooperative businesses—many of which would struggle to get money from traditional financial institutions. What looks weird to banks may be Standing Operating Procedure to PEACH.

What's ahead? The biggest challenge for PEACH these days is crystal balling what to expect in the way of increased claims with a covered population that

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Ina Meyer-Stoll and **Achim Ecker**, world-leading experts on “The Forum” from the ZEGG Ecovillage in Germany have been deeply involved in its development. They live in a committed and polyamorous partnership and offer to share their knowledge about spirituality, communication, love and 25 intense years of living in community.



Communal Studies Association

Encouraging the study of Intentional Communities

Founded in 1975, the Communal Studies Association publishes *Communal Societies*, 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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approaches a more typical demographic age mix, compounded by health care costs that are spiraling out of control (see my earlier comment about a national health care plan).

The key here is determining what are reasonable prices to pay for doctor and hospital bills associated with a claim. In the surreal health care world we live in—dominated by big insurance companies and the AMA, who is determined to protect the right of doctors to not be shackled by any upper limit to their compensation—health care costs are clearly bloated, to the point where insurance companies regularly negotiate discounts of 40 percent and more for listed charges. In this environment, it's incumbent upon PEACH to provide skilled guidance to participating communities on how to be tougher in negotiating these bills, and the management team is diligently pursuing this.

Finally, there's a definite limit to how large PEACH might get in that it's a program that covers communities, and extends no rights to individuals. That is, PEACH covers groups that cover their members. It's a version of reinsurance. As only income-sharing communities make this level of commitment to their members (and income-sharing communities are just one-seventh of the field of intentional communities), there are only so many groups out there that can take advantage of this program.

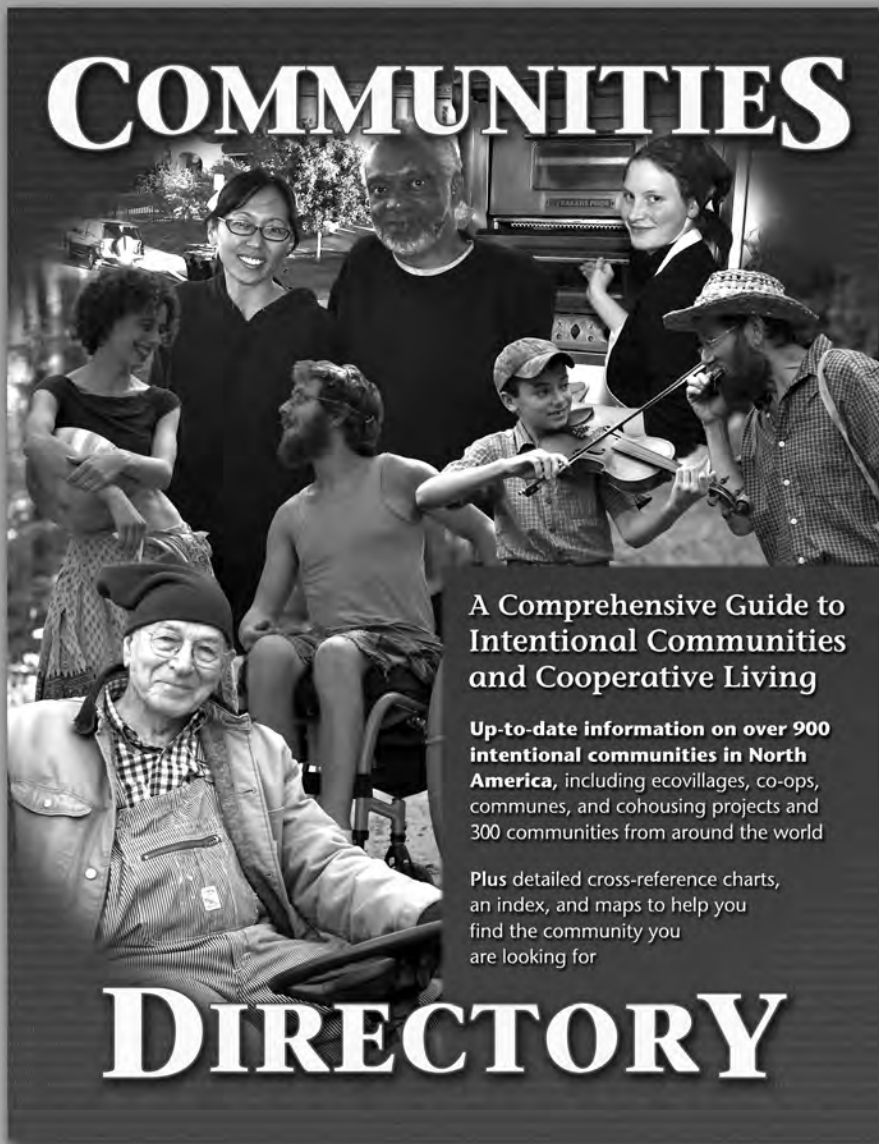
That said, it's still a vibrant model of what's possible when cooperatives come together to cooperate, and a healthy program to celebrate in an issue devoted to health. ❁



Laird Schaub is Executive Secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), publisher of this magazine, and cofounder of Sandhill Farm, an FEC community in Missouri, where he lives. He authors a blog that can be read at communityand-consensus.blogspot.com.

* Branch Rickey was the baseball executive who brought Jackie Robinson to the Brooklyn Dodgers, integrating Major League Baseball in 1947.

LATEST EDITION



COMMUNITIES

A Comprehensive Guide to Intentional Communities and Cooperative Living

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DIRECTORY

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The Bully Question

Q ■ How can we deal with a member who frequently gets their own way by force, skating close to the edge of what's acceptable behavior, and yet does nothing bad enough in itself to warrant expulsion?

From time to time we find ourselves living with someone we might label a bully. Usually a white male, older than 40. This person has developed a pattern of non-cooperation, ignoring agreements, ignoring established policy, ignoring decisions made by those with the responsibility to make them.

We're a large decentralized community (no guru). We delegate responsibility and authority for different areas to managers. We don't make decisions in whole community meetings. Bullies here manage to separate us and ignore decisions.

We have policies that spell out our decision-making methods and who is responsible for what. We have a list of expellable offenses and a process for calling for expulsion, and that of course is a last resort. We don't have any agreement or requirement for people to engage in mediation or feedback even when these are offered or requested. Most of us do agree to hear feedback, and to have a mediated discussion, if someone asks, but one of the difficulties of dealing with these difficult people is that they refuse.

These uncooperative people get their own way by force, by being so unpleasant that no one wants to deal with them. They disrespect

other people (especially women), belittle them and call them names. They succeed by "picking us off one at a time," targeting one person, even baiting her, pouring scorn and nastiness. Each of us treated this way gives up the fight at some point and avoids contact with this person.

By now you might wonder how these people ever got accepted as members, or why there hasn't been a unified uprising against them. Not every facet of everyone's personality comes to light during provisional membership. Every human has some good characteristics, and these troublesome people may be appreciated for their hard work, technical skills, or artistic nature. Not every member is affected by the person's nastiness. Publicly, the person may seem mild-mannered, only to turn into Mr. Hyde when disputing land use with another member in the back 40.

Some people wish we did require people to participate in conflict resolution, but given that we don't, and we like to base a lot on trust of each other rather than policing, what can we do to spot such people and select against them joining? What can we do to deal with them once they have slipped in? How can we become more courageous as individuals and how can we better unite and support each other in tackling the problems such people introduce? How do we recognize when someone is making too many infringements on our accepted ways of treating each other? What do we do then?



Tree Bressen responds:

You raise fascinating questions here. I think there are a variety of paths open to you and your group on this, some of which you already pointed to in what you wrote.

Your community is not alone in including some members who refuse to talk over conflicts or listen respectfully to feedback. Because I don't think there is any surefire method for screening such people out, I'm going to focus here on how to respond once the person is a member.

From what I have seen in situations of this nature, it is going to take concerted group action for anything to change. However, lest you despair, that concerted group does not necessarily have to include every person in the community. The key is to expand beyond stories from a few members who've been burned to the typically "silent majority" middle. When more people who are not known for raising issues and are reasonably well-liked (and whose skills are seen as just as valuable as the bully's) join the chorus, my experience says that's when change happens. It is truly unfortunate that a bunch of people usually get hurt (and the community often loses one or more good members) before a sufficient number of people are willing to set an appropriate boundary.

People perennially push on boundaries in groups. If you want your decisions taken seriously, that means finding a way to push back. Something needs to happen when someone doesn't follow an existing decision: a conversation between a committee and the offender, a discussion in community meeting about the incident, a fine or penalty, etc. Agreements only become real when members are committed enough to stand up for them.

Whether or not your community has an agreement about feedback, feedback happens. And with sufficient feedback, offending members almost always change or leave. In the really bad cases, no one believes they will leave until it actually happens, but I've seen it over and over again. Most members do not leave as a result of formal expulsion process deciding against them; just having such a process start is often sufficient. Outside of any formal process, if a dozen members go to that person and say, "I really think it would be better if you moved out," they probably will. If you can help the person find a face-saving way to do this, all the better.

The people who have the most leverage with the bully are their friends. So it's especially powerful when their friends (or political allies) are willing to say to them in some form, "Hey, I love you dude, but what you are doing is not cool."

Regardless of who raises the topic, the bully will usually get defensive, counter-accuse, come up with all kinds of rationales for their behavior. Don't let them change the subject, or focus on how other members are hypocritical because "look at what they did," or engage in other avoidance tactics: acknowledge

what they are saying, then bring the talk back to the subject of their own behavior. Express sincerely how their behavior impacts you and others you care about—be willing to be a bit vulnerable about this.

Some groups have found it useful to document incidents over time, so that when a public confrontation happens (with or without the bully present), there will be a record demonstrating the pattern, that this is not just about a few "over-sensitive" people.

Once members who are concerned gather enough momentum to attempt a group discussion, the bully or their allies will typically try to prevent that. They'll have some reason why the discussion should be delayed, threaten to boycott, or turn and accuse others of being a lynch mob. This is bullshit, and you should not stand for it. Perhaps my experience is not the norm, but I've seen the "scapegoating" charge used tactically to prevent dealing with problem behaviors more than I've ever seen real scapegoating happen. (More often the opposite is the problem—everyone bends over backwards to be nice and avoid scapegoating, and thus they allow the bullying to continue.) Community culture naturally favors direct communication, but the problem person doesn't need to be present to make progress on the situation. You are allowed to have a meeting on whatever you want, with or without all parties there.

Recipients of mistreatment typically feel helpless. You need to get back in touch with your power. Listing what your options are, even if you choose not to act on any of them, can feel very liberating. Those options may include revenge scenarios, public satire, formal shunning, and a wide variety of other behavior previously considered off-limits even in the privacy of your own mind. Remember, I'm not saying you should necessarily act on these ideas. But allowing yourself to list all the possibilities can open up space for creative options no one has considered before. And most important, it allows you to take personal responsibility for the choices you are making. Instead of "John did this to me," your self-talk becomes, "In this circumstance, I chose to do X."

I recently worked with a group facing a long-term bully situation. In that meeting (which the bully chose not to attend), we first provided an opportunity for members to express their emotions about their experiences, choosing a movement-based, time-limited format for this so that the energy would keep moving and would not feel too heavy, while allowing intense expression. Then people took turns doing sentence completions: "I give my power away when I..." and "I can choose to reclaim my power by..." in order to help them reclaim personal responsibility for what was happening. Finally, we did a series of roleplays, some about that specific situation and some more general, closing with one that looked into a future where the situation had been satisfactorily resolved years earlier and the community had learned how to prevent such dynamics from arising again.

Throughout the planning process, we were sensitive to the

*In order to yell back
i had to get past my self-identity as
a professional facilitator.*

possibility that people might attend in defense of the bully, and we wanted space for the legitimacy of that viewpoint as well. Therefore our formats were deliberately neutral: someone could just as well stand up and say, “I am angry at the community for how they have treated this poor person,” as say, “I am angry at how this person has treated me and our community.”

Drawing from my personal past, i used to live with a community member who regularly yelled at me inappropriately. My typical response to this was the same as when i was a kid: run to my room and cry. After a while i was able to stay in the room and cry: no real improvement. Eventually i got fed up and recruited an outside friend to coach me on offering a different response. After a bunch of rehearsal, i was finally prepared. *At that point i'd already essentially “won,” because the power dynamic had shifted.* If the bully did not yell at me, i won, because i did not want to be yelled at. If he did yell at me, i was ready to practice my new behavior. One evening it happened: he yelled at me, in the living room, and i shouted right back! We went back and forth at high volume for several minutes, until another member intervened (at which point i went out on the front porch to celebrate). In order to yell back i had to get past my conditioning as a womyn, and my self-identity as a professional facilitator that says polite conversation is the way to go—to this day i believe that in this case, yelling back was a good response, one that successfully reset the boundary between us. The icing on the cake? A week or two later, the yeller gave notice that he was leaving the community—surely not a coincidence.

If other members are reluctant to get involved, invite them to reflect on how one toxic personality can bring down a whole group, and ask yourselves whether that's the kind of community you want. Y'all are working hard on the tasks of community every day; do you really want your efforts undercut by one or a few people's bad behavior? How do these behaviors reflect on the community's core values (fairness, equality, democracy, peacemaking, feminism, etc.)? Allowing hurtful behavior to go unchallenged hurts everyone, not just the immediate target.

Never let a community member hold the group hostage. No one's skills are irreplaceable, and no one's contributions are worth the sacrifice of your self-respect.

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 lowercase “i” in her writing as an expression of egalitarian values.)



Laird Schaub responds:

This is a good topic, because, at root, it's about how cooperative groups can responsibly and effectively respond to a form of violence without being violent. What could be more important?

There's a lot going on here. First let's explore the behavior and how tricky it can be to define what's acceptable. The bully label implies intimidating behavior (which may or may not be intentional—sometimes it's just style or even class differences). Where some people cultivate directness, others experience the same behavior as confrontation. Sarcasm and cutting humor are disrespectful and mean to many; yet can be normal jocular discourse to others. A lot depends on what was normal behavior around the dinner table for each player when they were growing up.

For example, anger is a class issue. It tends to be a middle class taboo and a working class staple. Thus, a member who comes out of a blue collar (or even pink collar) upbringing will typically incorporate the expression of anger into everyday speech, and are at immediate risk of being labeled a bully for that behavior in a middle class culture that tends to feel intimidated in the presence of openly expressed anger.

But let's suppose you've sorted out “appropriate” from “inappropriate,” and you're satisfied that the protagonist fully understands that their actions are intimidating—yet they continue acting in a patterned way to push their own agenda. Now what?

While I question the assumption that it is solely up to the “bully” to make adjustments (you could just as reasonably ask others to work on how they react to bullying behavior), it can't be good for the group that members are allowed to refuse to make a good faith effort to hear and work constructively with critical feedback from other members about their behavior as a member of the group. This can be so destructive of group morale and functionality that I advocate explicitly adding it to the list of member responsibilities—even to the point of making it grounds for an involuntary loss of rights if a member consistently refuses to talk. To be clear, I am not saying that the person needs to agree with the critical assessment that they've done something wrong, or that need to accede to the request—or demand—that they change; I'm only saying they need to sit down and talk about it (without smirking, crossing their arms, or rolling their eyeballs) and try to work it out.

To turn this around, the group is going to have to find the will to deal with it. If a person crosses the line of acceptable behavior, then you have to have the spunk to hold them accountable. Part of the dynamic that makes this difficult is the style and class issue mentioned above. One of the reasons

bullies do what they do is because they've learned that it works. That is, people tend to back off and give in because it's too unpleasant to object, and bullies tend to have a higher tolerance for tension (and even rawness) than others. If the bully can succeed in making objectors feel like confrontation is their only active choice, then they may succeed in creating paralysis—as people will be reluctant to engage in the very behavior they are objecting to.

Fortunately, there is a way out of this paradox. It's possible to be a "gentle, angry person" who stands firmly for their values without being an asshole. If the bully rants, you don't have to rant back. Yet neither do you have to give in. You can be caring about their concerns and yet still stand strong for your boundaries around acceptable behavior. (**Hint:** this kind of conversation will often go better if you can start by demonstrating a clear understanding of the bully's concerns, *before* you state your objection to the way they are being expressed.) Consider it a form of tough love. Often this goes better in a group, where people can support each other—both in being firm and in being compassionate.

The idea here is to pair rights and responsibilities, and the bully's right to raise objections or otherwise speak their mind about group issues can legitimately be curtailed if they are not fulfilling their concomitant responsibility to behave acceptably and work cooperatively with the concerns and interests of others on the same topics. Of course, this isn't going to work well if you haven't spelled out what constitutes acceptable behavior. Make sure your footing here is solid before going toe to toe with the bully.

If you have a clear sense that the bully has broken group agreements, it will help if you have in place a pathway for working constructively with this dynamic. I suggest adopting something like the following graduated sequence, at the end of which a member could suffer an involuntary loss of rights. By spelling this out ahead of time, you will have options short of expulsion, which is a very heavy step and hard to take. Note that each step below involves more effort and group resources than the previous one. You can stop whenever the matter is resolved to the satisfaction of all parties.

Step 1. Can you let it go?

Step 2. Speak directly with the person.

Step 3. Get informal help to speak with the person.

Step 4. Get help from the team or committee that has responsibility for the area that the agreement covers and/or from the Reconciliation Team group (if you have a subgroup or committee whose job it is to help resolve interpersonal tensions in the group—and if you don't have such a team, I recommend that you create one) to talk with the person.

Step 5. Go to the whole group, in plenary.

Step 6. Recognize formally that the problem persists and all reasonable attempts to resolve the problem have been tried.

Step 7. Discuss in plenary the possibility of imposing sanctions.

One of the key concepts in this sequence is that it's important for the group to feel that you have exhausted all reasonable attempts to resolve an issue short of sanctions before applying them. Note: not all steps make sense in all situations and it is permissible to skip ones that offer no apparent prospect of relief. The overriding principle here is getting the problem solved as unobtrusively and expeditiously as possible. While you want to be compassionate, in the end you must be resolute in holding the bully's feet to the fire.

Unfortunately, it can be even worse. On occasion, I've encountered bullies who were not that bothered by social ostracism. In the extreme, I've seen people who could tolerate a degree of social isolation that others couldn't even imagine, generally because they've had very little social connection in their life and have no real prospects of it being better somewhere else. At the end of the day, if social sanctions are ineffective, your group may have to grapple with the possibility of simply doing the best you can to be non-reactive to the bully and going on with your lives with this dysfunctional person remaining in your midst (because they don't care to leave and they haven't done anything clearly expellable).

Last, let's look at how to screen prospectives to keep bullies out—on the theory that it's easier than dealing with them once they're members. If your group is experiencing a patterned behavior problem—whether bullying or anything else—learn from it! That means discussing and identifying which behaviors are unacceptable and then screening prospective members to see that they fall on the acceptable side of the line. While no one wants to start a courtship by discussing divorce, you may be well served by a frank conversation with prospectives where you make it clear if they become members and run afoul of the boundaries of acceptable behavior—which you have carefully laid out—they can expect to be the subject of group scrutiny, and it won't be fun for anyone.

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.



Beatrice Briggs responds:

To fully understand the situation it would help to know a few more details, such as: How long has the community been in existence? Is this problem new or has it always been present? How many people are in the group? What is the ratio of men to women? Is there only one bully or several? Does the bullying

*As a group, consider ways
you could vary your habitual response
to the bully. Call 911?
Smile sweetly and walk away?*

usually center around one issue (you mention land use) or does it vary?

Lacking more complete contextual information, here are some generic thoughts, focused on your question: How can we become more courageous as individuals and how can we better unite and support each other in tackling the problems such people introduce?

Form a support group. Convene those that have complained about being victims or witnesses to bullying behavior. Do not make a big public announcement—just get a few people together at first. Make it clear that the intention is not to indulge in whining and complaining, but to support one another in a learning process. Assume that there are important lessons for each of you, whether the bullies change or not. Spend time establishing trust within the group. Confidentiality (at least at the beginning) may be important. Other possible agreements: commitment to attend the first three sessions (or whatever number you agree on); no new participants until members of the first group begin to feel stronger.

The following exercises might be helpful for the group's learning process. Ideally, a skilled facilitator would guide you. Look in the community or beyond to find a resource person.

• **Uncover the ghosts.** In pairs, talk and listen (perhaps three-five minutes each for the first round) to each other about the ways in which the individual bullies remind you of people from your past. (Here is a place where the commitment to confidentiality is important.) Describe the similarities in behaviors and the response they provoke in you. Cry and tremble as needed. The listener does not interrupt, only provides complete attention. Switch roles. Repeat a few times. End by affirming something like "That was then and this is now."

• **Discover your inner bully.** Working in groups of three, assign these roles: the bully, the listener, and the observer. The person taking the role of the bully conjures up a clear image of how the community (or other) bully behaves (physical posture, tone of voice, gestures, etc.) and begins to act in that manner. The listener's job is to *understand* (not agree with) what the bully is saying, using the skills of paraphrasing and questioning to see if he/she has grasped the essence of what is being transmitted. The listener also tries to discern what emotions and values underlie the bully's behavior—again verifying that his/her perceptions are correct. The listener should NOT try

to change the bully's opinion, show him the error of his ways, prove how wrong he/she is, etc. Just listen and seek to understand. Continue for several minutes or until there is evidence that the "bully" feels understood. Then stop. Let the "bully" de-role. Ways to do this include shaking the body to disperse the energy, answering questions such as "What is your name?" "Where are you?" "Which way is north?" Once the person playing the bully is back into the present, the observer comments on what he/she saw. How successful was the listener at capturing the bully's opinions, feelings, and values? Was there a turning point in the conversation? What helped or hindered the communication?

After everyone has had a turn in all three roles, gather the whole group together to debrief the experience. What was it like to be the bully? Listener? Observer? What did you learn about your self?

• **Change your personal rules.** Reflecting individually, answer these questions. Be specific. Write down your responses.

1. What rule of *mine* (not necessarily the community rules) is the bully breaking?

2. Where did I learn this rule? Who taught it to me? (It may feel like a "universal" rule, but clearly not everyone is guided by it—e.g., the bully.)

3. What might I gain/lose by abandoning or modifying this rule? What inner power could I tap? What new options might I have?

Share your answers with one other person (or the whole group if it is small) and then demonstrate how you might break your old rule. Act it out! The idea is not to turn yourself into a bully, but to tap into strengths that your own rules have prevented you from accessing. Note: this is hard for some people. It feels risky, perhaps impossible. Encourage them to make a one-to-two percent change in the rule and test out how that feels.

• **Brainstorm and practice alternative responses.** As a group, consider ways that you could vary your habitual response to the bully. Call 911? Smile sweetly and walk away? Practice active listening as described in the "discover your inner bully" exercise? The key idea is that you cannot change the bully, you can only change how you react—and that can produce magical results. ✨

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.

Do you have a question for our Cooperative Group Solutions panelists? Please send it to editor@ic.org.



Health and Well-Being

This year's discussion of health care policy in the United States has focused attention on ways to assure broader access to allopathic medicine, including controlling the costs of health insurance and medical care. All of us, even those who use allopathic medicine only infrequently, have a stake in this debate (whose outcome, which may be known by the time you read this, is still a mystery as I write it). In community, as elsewhere, many of us currently go without health insurance, and are very vulnerable in cases of unexpected medical costs.

But this issue of COMMUNITIES is not about national health care policy.

In these pages, we explore how we can take charge of our own health and well-being, independent of larger government programs and policies. While the health insurance lobby may be able to block optimal solutions on a national scale, that doesn't mean we in our smaller communities are powerless.

We asked potential contributors a slew of questions: What role does community play in supporting health and well-being? How do organized intentional communities address their members' health and well-being needs? Do community-based alternative forms of "health insurance" hold promise? How do groups deal with illness and physical- or mental-health challenges? Are certain health-care modalities especially effective in a cooperative setting? How do individuals support their own health and well-being in community? What is the role of emotional and spiritual well-being in overall health of community members?

And we received a wide range of responses, a selection of which fill the rest of this magazine. (As a side note, if you are interested in contributing to COMMUNITIES by answering similar questions about future themes, please email editor@ic.org to be added to our Call for Articles list. We also post themes at communities.ic.org/submit.php.)

Reflecting on this topic myself, I've noticed a number of elements that seem essential to well-being and that can be nurtured by community. These include:

Being inspired by what we do. Satisfying work, reflecting our visions, passions, and talents while also serving our communities, is one of the best preventative and healing medicines around, especially when it contributes tangibly to the well-being of others in our lives. Conversely, if we are not inspired by our work and other activities, if they tend to drain us rather than feed us and others, they can literally make us sick. Community can offer an arena in which to reduce our monetary needs through cooperation, simpler living, and mutual aid; engage in a greater variety of work; and explore the idea that

we can always feel inspired about what we are doing (and if not, something's out of balance).

Human connection and support. The importance of friendship, family, and social networks in contributing to health, well-being, and longevity is not new news, nor is it confined to intentional community settings. Community of any kind can give us more reasons to be well, and more ability to maintain that condition too. By the same token, social isolation, alienation, and loneliness can deprive us of not only some of the motivation to take good care of ourselves and one another, but of the means of doing it, and can lead us toward health-destroying habits that promise, at best, to shorten our period of misery by ending it early, in death.

Health-maintaining lifestyles, including diet and exercise. Community can act as a catalyst toward healthier ways of eating, living, and practicing preventative care. Many people's diets improve markedly when they join with others in community, sharing cooking responsibilities and bringing their food choices more in line with their values and their health. Community can also encourage healthy physical activity, whether in shared gardening plots, construction projects, environmental restoration work, yoga sessions, ultimate frisbee games, or other alternatives to sitting around on a couch by oneself watching television and ingesting various combinations of sugar, corn syrup, salt, grease, artificial flavorings, preservatives, and white flour.

Self-expression and communication. Community nearly requires us to express ourselves and to communicate with one another; if we don't do those things, we can barely call the result community (instead, it may resemble a shared prison in which all prisoners must remain mute). Self-expression and communication, undeniably good for the soul and therefore for our health, can flourish in community settings, as we inspire one another to explore our creativity and learn from one another how to talk, listen, and otherwise communicate in effective ways.

Other health-promoting items on my list: **Quiet and contemplation; connection to nature; maintaining a healthful, sanitary environment; humor; laughter; flexibility; respect; gratitude...**and knowing (as with this piece of writing) when to stop. ❁



Whether in COMMUNITIES, in Lost Valley Educational Center's vegetable gardens, or along its nature trails, Chris Roth likes finding seeds, fruits, and bugs (editor@ic.org; www.lostvalley.org).



Growing a Culture of Community Health and Well-Being at Earthaven Ecovillage

By Arjuna da Silva

While the country stresses out over what kind of health insurance policies will not drain the national coffers, most of us Americans seem determined to let others make up the rules for us. Knowing practically nothing about health care and not much more about our own bodies, we neglect the essential and perhaps most mysterious and wonderful relationship we've been given in this life—the care, feeding, and mending of our bodies. There is so much information available to us, both from the extraordinary abundance of cyberspace and from within our own experiences, yet we go on ignoring that wealth while accumulating humongous losses.

Care for the Earth, Care for People

An intentional community turns out to be an ideal place to begin assuming responsibility for our own health care, as best we can, because of the diverse knowledge, skill, and availability of support. In the 15 years of Earthaven's young life, our members' general level of "self health care" has been very high. At times, emergency medicine for broken bones and other injuries, or allopathic remedies for chronic conditions, have had to take precedence over more idealized visions of on-site healing power. Still, for the most part, our members include health care as one of the major sustainability issues on our long list. As a permaculture-style project, Earthaven adopted the permaculture principles "Care for Earth" and "Care for People"

as high priorities.

To optimize our health, we emphasize foods and medicines we raise, procure, and modify ourselves to suit our various value systems. This naturally leads us to learn about the facts of health as much and as often as we can. Yet it all happens mostly by association and osmosis; brushing up against each others' lives brings all kinds of new (though often traditional) ideas into our awareness. Lives change radically sometimes. My guess is that no one at Earthaven now eats the way they ate when they first arrived.

Since we've been blessed almost from our inception with the presence of member-owned Red Moon Herbs plant medicine and education company, basic knowledge of local native plant medicine has become fairly common here. From years of courses, internships, and other direct and indirect relationships with Red Moon, many members have become adept at cultivating, harvesting, processing, and applying plant medicines both internally and topically for all kinds of acute and chronic distresses.

Energy awareness and bodywork have played major roles in most members' health care regime as well. We constantly study and share yoga and qigong, massage and acupressure, and a host of subtle and profoundly effective life-affirming practices. One of our members is an M.D. whose practice focuses on integrative medicine and who makes his allopathic and complementary

We remind each other to listen to and trust our bodies, prioritize plant and energy medicines, and pray at the altars of the wisdom traditions and good old common sense.

consultations affordable for us. Another member is an experienced chiropractor who gives generously of his time and expertise. A gifted homeopathic physician also joined us recently. The several other skilled folk medicine and homeopathic practitioners among the membership all gift, barter, and accept dollars for their wisdom and service.

Since all homes at Earthaven have needed to be built from scratch, the opportunities to apply the standards of non-toxic and healthy “green” buildings to our construction projects abound. We use a minimum of synthetic materials and usually calculate the embedded energy in any given product, often choosing the more labor-intensive methods (building with earthy clay instead of concrete, for example). Our early experiments in natural building—one-room “huts” of every possible new and recycled material we could think of—yielded a lot of information about what works and doesn’t in this southeastern mountain climate. (When we started Earthaven, we considered ourselves to be in a temperate rainforest; a decade of increasingly dry years began to diminish our apparent need to compensate for all that cool wetness, but now we seem back into the rainforest cycle.) We are still learning about the most effective natural ways to deal with moldy environments, particularly in the middle of the summer; how well we build can play a large role in dealing with the challenges of the climate.

What makes for a healthy diet still remains an open question, although we all seem to agree (whether we prioritize it or not!) that fresh, organic, unprocessed, traditionally prepared foods are best. We are vegetarians and devoted meat eaters and folks in between. We like the principles of naturally fermented foods, from grains to vegetables to fruit to milk products. We’d like to be able to raise most of our own food, yet know that our preferences and

habits are likely to keep us connected to producers beyond our own bioregion as long as feasible. How we want to eat affects how we use our land too, so many times our dietary preferences lead to political debate.

A quick survey of our members confirms that most of us don’t have health insurance. We run the gamut from well-heeled retirees to folks who are used to living hand to mouth. Yet all of us rely perhaps more than we realize on the reminders we give each other about health: to listen to and trust our bodies, prioritize plant and energy medicines, and pray at the altars of the wisdom traditions and good old common sense. We did once consider starting our own community health insurance fund, which would cover modalities not actually covered by most insurance companies, but some members felt too poor to contribute while others thought it would take too long to make much of a difference.

I suppose no discussion of health care is complete without reference to death care, a topic which seems, gratefully, to become less and less shadowed by the fear-based culture from which most of us come. Two of our members have passed through that gate, one while living here and another while receiving treatment out of state. One’s body and the other’s ashes are in our ground. Two other dear friends have died this year. All four deaths have been greeted with a fair amount of sadness, yet resulted in unanticipated levels of bonding and spiritual strength.

At the other end of the life spectrum, births at Earthaven have been well-spaced and healthy. Most women of child-bearing age have learned fertility awareness from the Red Moon Herbs instructors, and many attend doula trainings, especially when planning to be pregnant. New parents are tended to for as long as possible during the crucial early bonding time.

(continued on p. 71)

The ZEGG Forum at Earthaven

We sit in a circle, and two facilitators agree to focalize and facilitate the session. After three years and two workshops with trainers from ZEGG community of Germany, some of our members are showing real talent facilitating folks’ inner work and helping us gain insight, sometimes even relief. In one-minute “check-ins” and also in longer, un-timed segments, we may enter the circle and make eye contact with the familiar faces sitting there, as we move around and express what seems to be “alive and true” for us in that moment. If we’re talking about or even to someone in the circle, we still refer to them as her or him, and this helps diminish reactivity and the need to respond. As we move, we listen to and perhaps utilize a facilitator’s suggestions. We continue expressing ourselves in sound and movement until we feel we’ve come to the end of what we want to share. When we sit down, the whole group acknowledges us with an audible or visible gesture of appreciation (e.g., applause). The facilitator then asks if we want “mirrors” and, if we do, several observers may come into the center, one at a time, to repeat, interpret, or otherwise share what has come to them about us. When they’re complete and sit down, they’re also acknowledged with applause by the group. We do this acknowledging because we want to assure everyone that the very act of sharing with us, whatever the content, is highly valued.

We usually begin with one of several group games, some of which are silly but help to lighten us up and get us connected. We’ve used Forum for playfulness, just to check in about how we’re doing on a given day, in response to topics of conflict or concern, and to work on our relationships with one another. Sometimes what someone is sharing seems banal, sometimes it’s painful to watch. Sometimes there’s catharsis, or a sense of resolution; whatever happens is OK. We continue to develop our flexibility, resilience, and courage as we practice, evaluate, and then adjust our use of this remarkably helpful group sharing tool.



Health and Community: A Move to Edinburgh

By Sophie Unwin

The journey from London to Edinburgh takes approximately four and a half hours by train, but it took me almost 10 years. I knew already when I was 26 that I was not suited to the city: that my eyes were dull and my skin was dirty, my muscles were heavy and my throat was constantly sore with the pollution, but it was home—to my knowledge and memories, to the circle of my friends, and to the skin which I wanted to shed but at the same time offered the seductive comfort of the familiar. I knew that I must leave London if I wanted to be well, and I always breathed so easily in Scotland near the sea and mountains, so when I found a new job up North, I took it.

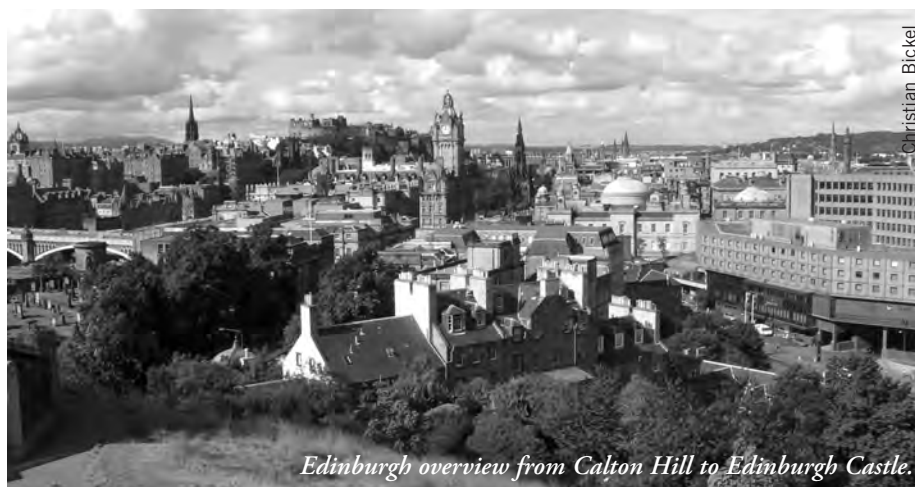
Finding the housing cooperative—officially titled “Auchinleck Housing Cooperative”—more informally known as “Stanley Road”—was an accident. Friends of friends had told me of it: I held images and phrases: “a quiet, magical space,” “hand-carved wooden kitchen cabinets,” “a large garden with a vegetable patch and a fire circle,” “an ecological house by the sea,” but I doubted that this house for eight women would be for me. I turned up in the city with nowhere to stay but a friend’s floor—and she said that rooms were coming up in the co-op. We both interviewed for it; she wanted it desperately but I was unsure. We waited for the decision: she was turned down and I was offered a room. The house would not explain their reasons—I could either say yes, or no. And, as I had few other options, I moved in.

I had gotten used to living on my own or with one other person: first Simon,

then Sarah. Within the sheer density and intensity of the city, the closeness could become claustrophobic. I remember feeling overwhelmed at stations and at undergrounds; bombarded with advertising slogans on billboards, walls, overhead displays, and steps. My work as an environmental campaigner and writer had helped me create some space to question this reality—but not enough, for many years, for me to change my own.

And so I hoped for peace in Scotland. But if I thought I would find this easily in Stanley Road, I was mistaken. With two Scottish friends recently moved abroad, the winter was hard and sometimes lonely. I felt trapped in office life. The huge rambling house can feel institutional. I paid to get my room painted soft yellow but the floor remains a deep, almost clinical blue.

Sometimes I also wonder what has brought each of us to live here: Katherine, Claire, Jaqueline, Toria, Laura, Jo, and me. Could our choice to be here mask an inability to cope with more conventional worlds? Or is it a transition period in itself? We all experience and communicate stress at times; our monthly meetings take the form more of list-ticking than creating a shared vision; it is often too easy to pass judgment on others, to express anger. I learn to become more tidy, try to pay as much attention to accounts and bills as I do to ideas and feelings.



Edinburgh overview from Calton Hill to Edinburgh Castle.

Christian Bickel



A panoramic view of Edinburgh from the Nelson monument.

A rapidly expanding family of mice came to live in our kitchen a few weeks ago; such were the mixtures of responses that some laid down traps and poison; others rescued the babies and fed them in the garden greenhouse. I attempted to arrange a meeting and no one came. And yet we talk incessantly but never seem to get to the point. Is it the lack of gender balance? I cannot decide whether to feel sad at the lack of our communication skills or amused at this uncoordinated comedy of errors. I miss the company of men and children, a more artistic and spiritual focus—and know I will move on one day.

And yet...this space has given me so much more health than I could ever have hoped for. To expect instant friendship and acceptance was too much: these things have built with time, and are all the stronger for it, with each meal cooked and shared, each bonfire outside, each party danced at, and each decision taken. We did discuss the mice in time, and we find ways forward.

Summer is all the more sweet for surviving the long Scottish winter. Seagulls nest on the neighbouring roof and we watch the babies hatch. It is hard to put my finger on the thing that has changed most significantly for me: I think it is the absence of my relentless restlessness and dissatisfaction, which has slowly faded into the background of my mind. I cannot fall back on my old familiar cry, "I must leave London." I am happy to stay here. Life starts to come to me unexpectedly, magical, abundant. I find a new part-time job promoting local food, get a grant to write, start playing the fiddle again. We choose to live so cheaply that we do not need much money and can nourish our spirits.

Yesterday I cooked the food we were

given in our box delivery: beetroots and butternut squash. Cut in big chunks and doused in oil and soya sauce and balsamic vinegar, sprinkled with fresh sprigs of rosemary and roasted in the oven. I boil ginger and garlic and cardamom and drink it to stem an early cold. Today I picked rocket and lettuce and spinach from the garden, did yoga on the lawn.

but I think it does have to include the principle that we are all signed up for something bigger than just ourselves. But this vision is no utopia; it is variously messy, irritating, inspiring, rewarding, exhausting, energising.

My own health—both physical and mental—is strengthened by being grounded in this reality, and in my greatest lesson

*These days my legs are strong from walking along
the shore and up and down the city's many hills,
and my eyes are bright.*

These days my legs are strong from walking along the shore and up and down the city's many hills, and my eyes are bright.

The other day I gave a passing tourist directions. After nine months, this city, landscape, and community have started to become my new home.

Caring for each others' well-being earns me the right to be cared for too. Perhaps the biggest expression of this comes in the healthy organic food we each cook for each other once a week. I am at home here, nourished and safe. I know that it is the spirit of community and ecology which is so fundamental to my health and well-being, that the whole is not just the sum of its parts, it is the sum of the relationships between us. The responsibility to our collective well-being offers me more than I'd gain from the freedom of living alone. I also know—intuitively, not because I have tested it—that this needs to be lived lightly, and this principle treated with great respect as it is fragile and can strain.

I do not think that this spirit has to be found in a housing cooperative, or in any specific form of intentional community;

at the moment: that I can start to find and reclaim my own space—to write, to be, to work, to cook, to play, to live—amongst others, rather than on my own.

It is an experiment in democracy to try to live by the principle that no one's perspective is better than another's. I also believe it is a lesson in philosophy—for others' interpretations of life can build, collage-like, into a richer understanding of our shared experience and of each other. I am minded of Wallace Stevens' poem "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird." He writes in stanza eight:

*I know noble accents
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;
But I know, too,
That the blackbird is involved
In what I know. ❀*

After writing this, Sophie Unwin went downstairs to find that no one had cooked for the second time this week. (Another lesson in not romanticising this experience...) Find Sophie's book-in-progress about ecology and community at threetonnecommunities.wetpaint.com.

Embracing a Terminal Illness

By Fred Lanphear



Raines Cohen, FIC Board member, announcing the selection of Fred to receive the Geoph Kozeny Communitarian Award at a community celebration in Fred's honor in January, 2009.

December 2007 brought about a huge change in my life! I received a diagnosis of ALS, better known as Lou Gehrig's Disease. ALS is a fatal disease without any known cure; the life expectancy averages two to five years after diagnosis. It was about this time Songaia Cohousing Community began the 10-week course *Aging in Place Successfully*, which explores the notion of community providing a place to live until death. I was to be a "guinea pig" for the concept of aging in place, as ALS is a degenerative disease that can be cared for at home, but does require an intensive, shared care structure as the disease progresses. I requested a community circle in January 2008 to share my diagnosis with everyone and to ask for their support as I move into the last phase of my life.

Songaia is a multigenerational cohousing community located in Bothell, Washington. It has 10.7 acres of wooded hillsides, orchards, gardens, and meadows, in the suburbs 20 miles northeast of Seattle. We are 15 families—34 residents, consisting of nine children, 16 adults (ages 30-59), and eight seniors (over 60). The community is nine years old and has not experienced any deaths.

During the sharing circle I offered an image of my condition as an adventure and invited the community to be a part of that adventure, "til death do us part." I asked folks to come and sit with me for sharing stories, a form of support that really appeals to me. Although it is noted that in a more final stage of ALS, one could be unable to speak, singing or reading poetry would be most appropriate as it would not require a response except with a smile or blinking of my eyes. Other types of support included physical care, in the form of bodywork (yoga therapy, stretching, and massage), equipment and house modification (door removal and ramp installation) and upkeep. Others have helped with my writings—a book about Songaia, my memoirs, and a journal of my journey with ALS.

As recommended in the course on aging, a "Share the Care" team formed, with Jean, Karly, Marilyn, and Carol volunteering to "captain" the contributions and care from the community as well as family members and friends. The team designed a survey and sent out emails. Although the larger community care began later on, folks at Songaia began immediately to provide support. They installed grab bars in the shower and platforms on a lift chair and commode, helped lift me out of chairs, and visited me often, with hugs and great conversations, throughout the year. They also responded to my wife Nancy's emergency calls for help when as I was precariously suspended while trying to get out of the car seat or when I fell off my scooter seat while trying to get off of it. I carried a cell phone programmed to be able to call various community members by pressing a single digit.

A little over a year after my diagnosis, I had a fall and broke my ankle. This shifted me into a new level of care. I could no longer walk and required assistance getting from a wheelchair into bed. A Hoyer lift and hospital bed were obtained for this purpose. It could be operated by one person but it was easier with two. Each Monday evening at dinner the care coordinator would pass a sheet of paper for people to sign up to help put me to bed for the week; it was called the "Tuck-in-Fred" team. Often an older child would come with a parent to help. Bedtime included helping me do leg exercises and goodnight hugs after I am in bed.

Three community women offered to work with me on a weekly basis to provide bodywork to keep my joints limber. Cindy does yoga therapy twice a week, Jean does a full body massage, and Michelle an active body exercise each week. Other folks came occasionally for massage and

exercises. Passive exercise is crucial, as I sit in a wheelchair all day. During the day community members, including the kids, will help me exercise/stretch my legs while I am still in the chair. When I was able to go to the swimming pool, Brent or Carol would come with Nancy to help me get in and out of the pool.

Periodically a care circle is held when there is a change in my health status and a new level of care is required. Medicare, plus our Group Health insurance, covers home health care and sends out a specialist as needed. For example, when I needed help to transfer from my chair to the bed or another chair, a physical therapist came and trained Nancy and about 12 community members how to move me using a transfer board.

Visits by community members to provide physical care are often used as an opportunity to check in with me about my spiritual state of being. These may be brief check-ins or lengthy discussions. They are opportunities to provide emotional support as well as knowledge about how best to care for me. Karly, a speech therapist and neighbor, visited often, but about once a month she also checked in on my breathing, swallowing, and how often I might have had choking issues.

The community decided to celebrate my life while I was still able to enjoy it and before I died. The first challenge was to create a context for the celebration. We decided it was not a living funeral or an early 80th birthday celebration. Instead, it would be a rite-of-passage ceremony marking my transition from an active elder to a “revered grandfather,” one who tells stories and shares his wisdom. To symbolize my new role, our grandchildren, along with the community children, enveloped me with a blanket in the form of a Grandfather robe! It was a grand celebration with 130 attendees. Individuals were invited to share their memories and good wishes to me. Once again I felt blessed, honored, and cared for so deeply.

The community does not see this care as an obligation but rather as an opportunity to be a part of my journey. Our family provides the primary care and integrates homecare from our health care



Photos courtesy of Fred Lanphear

Top left: Barbara Bansenauer and son Ian (age 10) hoisting Fred out of his chair in preparation for helping him to get into bed. Top right: Cyndi Kershner doing her weekly yoga therapy session with Fred. Above: Michelle Grandy doing weekly stretching exercise with Fred.

The community does not see my care as an obligation but rather as an opportunity to be a part of my journey. The “Share the Care” team distributes the workload so that it does not become a burden to just a few.

providers along with support provided by the ALS foundation. Individual members of the community have stepped forward to take on the responsibility of coordinating the “Share the Care” team that includes family members, friends, and community members. This distributes the workload so that it does not become a burden to just a few. This arrangement works. It might not work as well if I had an illness with more serious complications, as in the dementia of an Alzheimer patient. Each situation has to be considered based on the needs and capability of the community. I have come to realize that I couldn't have picked a better place to be in my condition.

These past two years have brought about huge changes in our community of Songaia! These changes have given us opportunities and possibilities for new relationships and connections with each other. We have all become more present to the priceless experience of daily living, even death and dying. ❁

Fred Lanphear has lived in various forms of intentional community for over 35 years. He is a cofounder of Songaia Cohousing near Seattle, where he currently lives and where he was initiated as an Elder in 2006. Fred was a cofounder of NW Intentional Communities Association (NICA) and serves on its Board of Directors. He also served on the Fellowship of Intentional Communities (FIC) Board for two terms.



GARDEN

as Therapist and Community Organizer

By Craig Chalquist

Chris Roth

When my therapist diagnosed me with Major Depression, she referred me to a psychiatrist, who prescribed an antidepressant. Neither asked me if I liked to garden.

This omission should not sound strange. American psychology rolls off the assembly line of American culture: a culture of hyper-individualism, where your moods and conflicts remain tucked away inside you. The presence or absence of your connection to nature, to plants and animals, to climate, or to community (it is thought) have nothing to do with your illness or health. The solutions, like the problems, are internal.

As a matter of fact, I knew little about gardening back then. I passed most of my days indoors, in aptly named apartments and in linoleum-floored classrooms where I learned how to be a psychotherapist. Sigmund Freud, Virginia Satir, Irv Yalom, and Aaron Beck were included in the curriculum. John Muir, Patch Adams, Josephine McCracken, and Alice Walker were not.

In the early 1990s, pastoral counselor Howard Clinebell grew tired of this artificial split between self and natural world. Aware that it impaired human health, he collected a number of natural practices he used in his counseling work: gardening,

walking, appreciating scenery, gathering plants, being around animals, strolling near lakes and on seashores. He called this *ecotherapy* and published a book by that name.

By the time Professor Clinebell died in 2005, accumulating research demonstrated the efficacy of animal-assisted therapy, horticultural therapy, wilderness excursions, and a host of other ecotherapeutic treatment methods. In an updated anthology edited by me and Linda Buzzell, M.F.T., and recently published by Sierra Club Books (*Ecotherapy: Healing with Nature in Mind*), we also included chapters on time-stress management, nature-informed dream work, and community ecotherapy.

I no longer practice psychotherapy, having moved into education, but as a recently certified Master Gardener, I work in a community garden behind the Contra Costa Times building in Walnut Creek, California. I'm no longer depressed, either. Some of the research I summarized in *Ecotherapy* shows reconnection to nature to be as effective in some cases as medication. Hyperactive children calm down outside, as do dementia sufferers. Even looking out a window at a hillside or a river can speed post-operative recovery, diminish anxiety, lower blood



pressure, rally energy, improve mood.

In the garden you also meet people you might not have met otherwise. I have spaded, watered, planted, and harvested shoulder-to-shoulder with an organizational consultant, a business owner who travels around the world, a 20-year-old nervous (as he should be) about getting married, a horticultural scientist who adopts stray dogs, and an elderly man named Russ who likes dirty jokes. He tells them badly but with such an air of self-entertainment that people laugh anyway. I've eased eggplants and radishes and squash into the ground with retirees learning how to garden late in life and with inquisitive children learning that good food comes from good soil and not from a chain store.

In the garden, masks come off and gloves go on, and everybody is a neighbor. Because everyone is also a volunteer, nobody gets paid more than anyone else. The garden houses no job titles or corner offices, although someone in the plot next to ours just put up a scarecrow to ward off hungry squirrels.

Conscious gardening takes me even farther than considerations of mental health. When I find myself in the garden, muddy boots holding me to the clay-rich soil, I stand at the

Hyperactive children calm down outside, as do dementia sufferers. Even looking out a window at a hillside or a river can speed post-operative recovery, lower blood pressure, improve mood.

center of the world: a rare feeling for us restless descendants of pioneers and colonizers. When I am there, or rather here (here is here here!), I know and embody who I deeply am: a creature of the Earth that gave me life, a fellow animal among so many others, and a thread in the living eco-historical weave that is California, my long-suffering homeland.

When this shift of consciousness grounds me here among spiders and birds and blossoms, the world no longer clanks like a lifeless heap of machinery, as a dying worldview would have me believe, or feels like a "resource" to exploit. Instead, it gives off a feeling of animation so intense that I stand convinced (as all my ancestors were) that this planet pulses with soul. I am reminded that "human" and "humus" share common roots, and that losing national parks and forests and topsoil really amounts to losing our collective sanity.

Of course, merely being in the company of soils, plants, and animals will not necessarily work the magic of healing and regrounding. I know of agribusiness managers (wrong to call them farmers) in the Great Central Valley of California who spend all day outside in irrigated landscapes they grid over with cash crops interspersed with branded animals they think of as livestock. The average logger knows trees far better than I do. But such knowledge remains trapped on the outside, objectifying what it studies instead of opening the entire heart, an organ of perception as well as of empathy.

The occasional Thoreau aside, transforming our relationship to the natural world awaits community settings in which the customary techno-fix/spectator mentality through which we squint at the world can expand into a deeper appreciation for the world's astonishing complexities: its intricate flows and feedbacks, its clever solutions to ecological problems, its immense capacities for self-rejuvenation. Earth-friendly communities in turn require local natural settings in which to flourish.

Try the garden. The beginnings of eco-community are there at hand: a landscape to learn, a few tools, a handful of seeds, and some fellow experimenters awkwardly bending toward the ground, asking later in astonishment, "How could we have forgotten where we came from, what supports us, and where all labors end?" ❁

Craig Chalquist, Ph.D. is an author, educator, and core faculty member of the School of Holistic Studies at John F. Kennedy University in Pleasant Hill, California. His books include Terapsychology: Re-engaging the Soul of Place and Ecotherapy: Healing with Nature in Mind (visit ecotherapyheals.com).

Cell Phones, Education, Farming, and Mental Health

By Shepherd Bliss

Sonoma State University spreads across 274 acres at the base of the Sonoma hills in the lovely Redwood Empire in what remains a semi-rural county in Northern California. Copeland Creek runs down one side of campus and a pond attracts ducks and other birds. The University, where I teach part-time, is a village of nearly 10,000 people—students, teachers, staff, and administrators. We have restaurants, a post office, stores, a police force, a theater, and other customary village things.

And we have cell phones.

The unconscious and excessive use of these tiny machines, especially for texting, reduces the intimacy of our community and damages our educational mission. I live and farm about 20 minutes from campus, where I participate in an agrarian community. I also experience the negative impact

of mobile phones by agrotourists on my nature-based farm. In both these places I see how the inappropriate use of cell phones can erode various things, including one's mental

health, attention span, being in present time, and ability to participate in the living communities that surround us.

Redwoods and Cell Phones

When I walk on SSU's beautiful redwood-lined campus, I notice many students with faces buried in these devices. They miss the trees and other humans passing by, as well as the birds above, which are an integral part of our village. I've even seen two people walk along talking to each other—on their cell phones. Their hands would be better used to hold each other, rather than cold machines. Those with Bluetooths in their ears remind me of the part-machine, part-human race called Borgs in *Star Trek*. Walking is one of the healthiest things one can do; being attached to a machine reduces some of its multiple benefits, as Thoreau wrote about in his classic essay "Sauntering."

I invited a SSU freshman class off-campus for a film and dinner. The first thing that some of these teens did at the restaurant was to put their cell phones on the dinner table. Some of their little gadgets promptly vibrated, buzzed, and made a variety of demanding sounds. This did not help to build a sense of community, which was my primary goal.

My dinner guests were soon miles away texting, having what sounded like one-way conversations intruding into our dinner, and playing phone



games, ignoring the rest of us at the table in front of them. What happened to old-fashioned connective meal-time conversations? When the primary relationship becomes with a talking machine, rather than with a multi-dimensional person with whom to have spontaneous, life-deepening, and life-changing dialog, something is lost. Meals are traditional community-building times, which cell phones can disrupt.

As they multi-tasked on so-called “smartphones,” I felt annoyed and alone—a slow dinosaur at a table with fast-moving butterflies with short attention spans flickering away into cyberspace, their consciousnesses split. They are masters at quick scans of screens, rather than reading entire books. I must admit that I am old-fashioned and prefer homemade music and food to the factory-made stuff. I prefer live story-telling and the oral tradition of recited poetry to television. I am a traditionalist who resists being drawn into the need-it-yesterday world.

I didn't say anything to my 21st century students at the dinner table about their cell phone use, although, to initiate discussion, I did later circulate an article on the downsides of texting. The students were defensive, but it was a good experience in critical thinking, which is what I teach and seek to practice here.

As they multi-tasked on so-called “smartphones,” I felt annoyed and alone—a slow dinosaur at a table with fast-moving butterflies.

One of the students in that class, Sally-Anne Petit, helped me understand the use of cell phones from the perspective of her generation: “Changes in our world have made us feel uncomfortable...or even even in danger of being without a mobile technological device. We use these devices to hide us from scary things in this world. They provide shelter, or even a friend.

This is important because part of growing up is defending yourself and learning how to act in awkward, or uncomfortable, perhaps even dangerous situations.”

My college students tend to be sweet and open-hearted; they also seem to have more trouble reading entire books and sustaining attention than they did even a few years ago; they appear more distant and distracted. Their emails have gotten briefer and are not always in standard English; they employ abbreviations that I do not understand. They seem to have less patience for ambiguity and paradox, preferring a machine-like yes and no and making overstatements like “always” and “never.” I am concerned that their fascinations with the newest phone technologies dumb them and their discourse down.

Down on the Farm

My main work for most of the last 16 years has been as owner of the organic Kokopelli Farm. My goals are to provide good food, agricultural education, and an environment within which people can make direct contact with nature and see how they are an integral part of it. So I have a U-pick component for my berries and offer farm tours, which start in a redwood stand, open up to the fruit trees and fields, and go down into a marsh. My specialty is what I have been writing about as agropsychotherapy and agrotherapy—farms as healing places.

At our family farm in Iowa in the late 1940s, electricity had not yet arrived; people tend to forget that rural electrification of America's Midwest did not happen until the late '40s. “Once upon a time, a long, long time ago...” is how our evenings began, with a live story, rather than television. We had an icebox, a windmill to run the well, an outhouse, gas lights, wooden toys, and other

(continued on p. 72)



Gut Health

By Dona Willoughby

As I sit by the Bay, my mind and body are immersed in the beauty above, below, behind, and in front of me. The fluffy white clouds change shape as they float past stunning Mauna Kea Volcano with its verdant green hills terracing down in sleepy Hilo Town. My shoulders relax as I receive a massage from the warm sun. Green sea turtles pop their heads up for air as they gracefully swim along the lava rocks in the azure blue Pacific Ocean. Sounds of the gentle rhythmic waves, calls of a sea bird, a dove, and a cardinal surround me like a blanket, adding to my sense of peace and tranquility.

A magical rain sprawl approaches, encompasses, and passes me by.

As I stand in awe of Mother Nature, my cell phone rings. My friend and lover, thousands of miles away, has picked this opportune time to call. I hope our conversation will be as intimate and beautiful as my surroundings. After a brief catch up, he asks how I feel about his being absent? I choose my words carefully while being honest, transparent, and avoiding blame. I reveal my feeling of anxiety while realizing that I have a need for clarity. I make a clear request for him to tell me when he will return. He attempts to answer my request by saying he “possibly might return.” I feel my heart speed up and my gut become tight. “Triggered” is the word we use at La’akea Community for my reaction. When someone is triggered, they have an overwhelming emotional response and may not be rational. We practice Marshal Rosenberg’s Nonviolent Communication (NVC) at La’akea. In NVC, the Jackal is used to portray the moralistic, critical, judgmental, blaming voice many of us internalized when we were small. I hear my internal jackal voice screaming “POSSIBLY??? Possibly you could return tomorrow or 10 years from tomorrow. Just say, ‘No, you won’t give me any clarity.’” The conversation ends in turmoil.

I close my eyes and take some deep breaths. I return to an inner state of peace before beginning to flow through the 12 community errands I set out to complete earlier in the morn-

I find myself being held and stroked from head to toe. I feel the knot inside my gut release.

ing. I make sure to include a swim in the ocean before returning home to La’akea.

It is my turn to prepare dinner. I have no reason to rush. I enjoy walking out to the garden and harvesting all kinds of fresh greens, taro, beans, squash, and eggs. As I get into the flow of cooking, I note an uncomfortable feeling still menacing my gut from my earlier phone conversation. Instead of repressing the feeling, I take note, and decide to do something later to relieve it. I serve a freshly prepared feast, and receive multiple praises from community members. My needs for appreciation and value are filled.

During dinner, I make a request to receive attention from a fellow community member. He agrees. I need to decide what form of attention I want to receive. One option is Peer Counseling, in which all members of La’akea have been trained. A Peer Counseling session consists of both parties giving undivided loving presence to the other one for an allotted amount of time. Peer counselors suggest ways their clients may work on issues, but they do not give advice.

I decide I want to tell my story, enjoy free-flowing conversation, and be given advice.

Another community member asks if she can join in our exchange when dinner is completed. Two loving persons listen as I tell about my earlier phone conversation and how I reacted. I find myself being held and stroked from head to toe. I’m given positive feedback about my lover, my relationship, and myself, along with compassionate suggestions. I feel the knot inside my gut release. My need for safety, understanding, physical attention, and to know that I matter is met.

My jackal voice has changed to a giraffe voice (also described in NVC). Giraffes have the largest heart of any land animal. My giraffe voice gives me empathy for having feelings and needing beautiful clarity. My giraffe ears try to hear my lover’s feelings and needs and con-

nect with him at a heart level.

Darkness has descended. I slowly head back to my sleeping cabin. No light is needed; my feet are familiar with the path. I sense the foliage and smell the night-blooming jasmine along the way. My heart is so open it invites the stars in and they accompany me to bed, soothing me into a deep, tranquil sleep.

I awake with the dawn refreshed and rejuvenated, and complete my meditation and Ashtanga Yoga practice before community check-in at 8:30. During check-in we make plans for the day, find out what folks' needs are, and try to make arrangements for all needs to be met. I prepare a breakfast smoothie using coconut juice, fresh greens, bananas, and herbs I gathered from the land, including high calcium hibiscus and gota cola, known in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) "to make you live forever."

As I attend the morning work party, involving physical work on our land to sustain ourselves in food, I catch myself hurrying, an old habit of mine. I remember there is no deadline, and that nothing horrible will happen if someone waits. I let my shoulders, forehead, and mind relax as I slow my pace.

After a lunch filled with camaraderie and laughter, I retire to my sleeping hut. I review my copy of *Healthy at a Hundred* by John Robbins. The book is a study of four cultures in which people live to ages past 100 and are still vibrant and healthy.

How does our La'akea culture compare to cultures of long-living healthy people? Similarities I note include close loving

relationships with lots of loving interactions; lack of loneliness; living close to nature; fresh non-processed food; work that does not entail emotional stress; regular exercise; clean air and water; following biological rhythms; joy and laughter.

Although I may someday reach the point that I am no longer triggered by life's events, I feel happy to live in a community/culture where I am encouraged to share my feelings and where my needs are respected. I appreciate having community members who use the tools of Nonviolent Communication and Peer Counseling to promote self-growth and effective resolution of emotional issues. I feel grateful that at La'akea we seem to cultivate habits similar to cultures who enjoy long, rich (in love and support), healthy lives. ❀

After a career in allopathic medicine, Dona Willoughby currently lives her passion of healing—both humans and this beautiful planet we live on—at La'akea. She assists in teaching permaculture, herbal medicine, beekeeping, and Nonviolent Communication. Her daughter Aniko and grandson Kai'ea also live at La'akea.



La'akea members from left to right, Judy Dolmatch, Dona Willoughby, Biko Long, Tracy Matfin, and baby Ai'ala.

The Shakers' Secrets of Longevity

By Susan Matarese and Paul Salmon

"A true Shaker, surrounded as he is with every physical blessing...seems almost a new being."—Hervey Elkins, 1853

The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, more commonly known as the "Shakers," is one of America's most important and enduring communal societies, spanning more than 200 years of American history. The Shakers lived in 19 communal villages ranging from New York and New England to Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky. Their religious beliefs included celibacy, communal ownership of property, ecstatic worship, and withdrawal from "worldly" society, practices that earned them both the admiration and enmity of their fellow Americans.

In addition to their manifold contributions in the fields of architecture, design, and mechanics, the Shakers provide us with significant insights into the role that community can play in promoting health and feelings of well-being. Nineteenth century accounts of the Shakers often remarked on the health and longevity of Believers, a feature that has been confirmed by modern demographic studies. At a time when the average life expectancy for Americans was 50 years, most Shakers lived into their 70s, 80s, and 90s. Although the Believers attributed their good health and longevity to the practice of celibacy, many factors played a role, including wholesome food, regular exercise, moderate use of alcohol and tobacco, careful personal and community hygiene (especially with respect to water supplies), as well as a comprehensive system of homeopathic medical care based upon an expert knowledge of herbal remedies. Likewise, a daily routine, the economic security that characterized their communal way of life, and the strong bonds of friendship (what the Shakers called "gospel affection") that united them, most likely helped to reduce stress and the physical vulnerabilities so often associated with it.

Shaker villages were comprised of one or more "families" ranging in size from 50 to 150 male and female members. Families were grouped according to spiritual maturity and commitment to Shakerism. Each family was an autonomous unit with its own leaders, land, and buildings, and was responsible

for its own economic survival. Family members lived, dined, worked, and prayed together. The sisters shared domestic duties and living quarters with other sisters, while Shaker brothers labored in the shops and fields, sleeping across the hall from the sisters (four or five to a room) in large communal dwellings. Each Shaker family provided food, clothing, shelter, education, recreation, and religious training for its members. Family members sang, danced, and worshiped as a group. Families prescribed and enforced appropriate behavior, and family Elders and Eldresses heard confessions and meted out discipline for infractions of Shaker rules.

One of the most striking features of the Shakers was their commitment to cleanliness. Almost without exception, visitors to Shaker villages noted the order and neatness of their build-

ings and the pleasing character of their roads and enclosures. Jacques Milbert, a French naturalist and artist who visited the Watervliet, New York community in 1820, remarked that "everything looked so spotless

as if the walls and even the floor had been varnished." Others contrasted the "coarseness" of the habitations of most Americans with the "large," "airy," "light filled," and "handsome" dwellings of the Believers. When Brother Isaac Youngs of the New Lebanon Village in New York visited the western colonies in Ohio and Kentucky in 1834, he was appalled by the "filth" he encountered in the towns and villages along his journey. He described one town as "stinking enough to breed cholera." Brother Isaac was stunned by the primitive log houses of his fellow Americans and wrote in his journal: "Not a single dwelling house have I seen...fit for people to inhabit." When forced to find non-Shaker accommodations, he noted that the lodgings were "not very clean" and "considerable short of what we find at home." In Harrodsburg, Kentucky he was repulsed by the water from the public trough. To Brother Isaac, it "looked as if dirty potatoes had been washed in it!" Traveling by coach he confided to his journal that his fellow passengers "smell rather rank." Not surprisingly, he recorded his delight upon finally reaching the Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill. The Shakers there had the first system of running water in all of Kentucky. Fed by a nearby spring, fresh water was gravity-fed through pipes

At a time when the average life expectancy for Americans was 50 years, most Shakers lived into their 70s, 80s, and 90s.

Elder Frederick Evans admonished his fellow Believers that the “salvation” of the body was no less important than the “health” of the soul.

into every kitchen, cellar, and washhouse. Brother Isaac wrote in his journal, “glad to get once more among good folks where we could feel at home.”

In an essay published by the Society in 1856, Elder Frederick Evans of New Lebanon admonished his fellow Believers that the “salvation” of the body was no less important than the “health” of the soul. To this end he urged them to bathe regularly, ensure proper ventilation in their dwellings and workshops, air their beds and bedding, wear light clothing, and keep their rooms cool. As one English visitor noted in 1884, “Everything is kept delicately clean...an air of refinement, not to say luxury, seems to pervade the bedchambers in spite of their absolute simplicity.”

Such practices are consistent with the goal of public health policies and practices to prevent the onset and spread of disease in community and population-based settings. Until well into the 20th century, infectious diseases were the leading cause of mortality, and Shaker health practices did much to spare them the ravages of communicable disease. These practices were a natural byproduct of religious values reflected in the passage in I Corinthians speaking of the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit. For example, the Shakers escaped the devastating cholera epidemic that swept through many American cities in the 1840s.

Regular physical activity and good nutrition were also important elements of the Shakers’ healthy lifestyle. All members engaged in work suited to their age, abilities, and gender. Shaker communities were largely agricultural. Brothers cleared and planted fields, harvested crops, herded sheep, cut wood, trimmed trees, repaired stone walls, and labored as carpenters, blacksmiths, shoemakers, tinsmiths, tailors, and book binders, among many other occupations. Sisters rotated through a wide variety of tasks as well, working as housekeepers, cooks, and laundresses. They milked cows, picked fruits and berries, dried herbs, wove cloth, made candles and preserves, and served as community nurses and physicians. Hannah Kendall, one of the leaders or “parents” of the Harvard and Shirley communities, rejected the mainstream American view of women as weak and infirm creatures. “Believers,” she said, “should walk about lively and go about (their) work with a quick step.”

Although all Shakers worked, productive labor, not drudgery, was their goal. Countless inventions were intended to lighten the burden of work. One observer called the Believers’ attitude toward labor the “middle way,” while another commented on its “easy kind of rhythm.” Undoubtedly physical activity contributed significantly to their health. Numerous visitors



Sister Sarah Collins (1855-1947) wove chair seats well into her 70s, an example of the good health and vitality of many Shakers.

Courtesy of the Winterthur Museum: Edward Deming Andrews Memorial Shaker Collection

commented on the “fresh, fine complexions” of the Shakers, especially the brothers. Interestingly, the Shakers’ practice of vigorous ecstatic dance likely contributed to their health and well-being by providing regular aerobic activity in the context of their worship services. A visitor to Watervliet in 1839 noticed the Shakers wiping perspiration from their faces after the dance. Another visitor, who attended a service at New Lebanon in 1842 that included a “quick march,” wrote, “I consider the sort of exercise I witnessed...well calculated to impart health and secure sound sleep.” Many Shakers also recorded the joy and “union” they felt while singing, an additional but generally unacknowledged contribution to feelings of happiness and well-being.

In addition to regular exercise, the Shakers’ diet, which included an abundance of fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, likely contributed to their general good health and longevity. Visitors to the Shaker communities frequently noted their slender, lithe physical appearance. Apparently Elder Thomas Damon of Hancock was an exception to this general pattern, because he recorded a resolution in his diary to give up eating pie and cake! As early as 1840, the Society published prohibitions against the use of alcohol, pork, and tobacco, although these rules were never followed consis-



The Shakers practiced an holistic approach to health which included an expert knowledge of medicinal herbs.

Roots, herbs, and bark were turned into lotions, pills, ointments, tinctures, syrups, and oils to treat a wide array of ailments.

tently. Nevertheless, there are few reports of drunkenness in community records, and pipe smoking seems to have been reserved mostly for ceremonial purposes. Some families embraced vegetarianism and Grahamism. The latter movement, which captured the interest of many 19th century Americans, advocated a diet of whole wheat bread, cold water, and vegetables to dampen sexual desire, doubtless of great appeal to a community of celibates. Although some families embraced such dietary reforms, most continued to eat a wide variety of foods, including meat. However, there was clear recognition of adverse consequences associated with dietary indulgence. Leaders like Frederick Evans preached against the dangers of too much fat, and Seth Wells, who wrote a manuscript in 1846 entitled "Temperance the best preserver of Health," argued (like many health professionals today) that much illness was rooted in diet. According to Wells, highly seasoned food clogged the system

and obstructed free circulation of fluids. He pointed out that good health was a duty of Believers.

The Shakers also benefited from the loose, light clothing that had become the hallmark of the sect early in its existence. Sisters wore peasant-style dresses with empire waists, high necks, and modesty capes, eliminating the need for the stays and corsets that so harmed the internal organs of their worldly sisters. Both men and women wore hats when out of doors. Broad-brimmed straw hats for the brethren and palm-leaf bonnets for the sisters were intended to encourage modesty and the Shaker commitment to chastity. Nevertheless, they also protected the Believers' faces from the cancers caused by prolonged exposure to sunlight.

No discussion of Shaker health and longevity would be complete without some description of the homeopathic health care system available to all Believers. Although in the early years of the sect the Shakers emphasized faith healing

and the laying on of hands, in time every community had its own nurses and physicians, both male and female. The Shakers also permitted consultations with physicians from the outside world, and were eager to adopt ideas and practices of more traditional allopathic medicine which they deemed beneficial. Thus, the Shakers practiced eclectic health care that combined elements of both homeopathic and allopathic (often termed "heroic") medicine that embodied an holistic approach to health. The Shakers in New England, in particular, were attracted to the ideas of Samuel Thomson, a New Hampshire farmer who used his knowledge of folk remedies to develop a system of botanical medicine that offered a gentler alternative to the more intrusive techniques of mainstream medical care. Roots, herbs, and bark were turned into lotions, pills, ointments, tinctures, syrups, and oils that were used to treat a wide array of ailments. Sister Elizabeth Lovegrove, who was assigned to help in the "physician's lot" in 1837, carefully recorded the treatments she administered and their effectiveness in her journal. Despite her creative spelling, Sister Elizabeth's conscientiousness and genuine concern for her patients is palpable to anyone reading her entries. Over the course of her assignment, she treated "influenza, canker rash, cholic, inflammation of the eye, and sore throat." According to Sister Elizabeth, "vaper baths, hot stones, a poultice of camomile and Marsh mallows, tea of Johnswort and pepper grass seed" all had a "good effect."

Many Shaker physicians recognized the importance of prevention in health and well-being, a clear reflection of Public Health priorities. John Shain, the homeopathic "doctor" at Pleasant Hill, could not contain his irritation with Brother James Cooney who chose calomel (mercury) treatment administered by two of the world's physicians for an undisclosed ailment. Shain, who had long preached the benefits of a vegetar-

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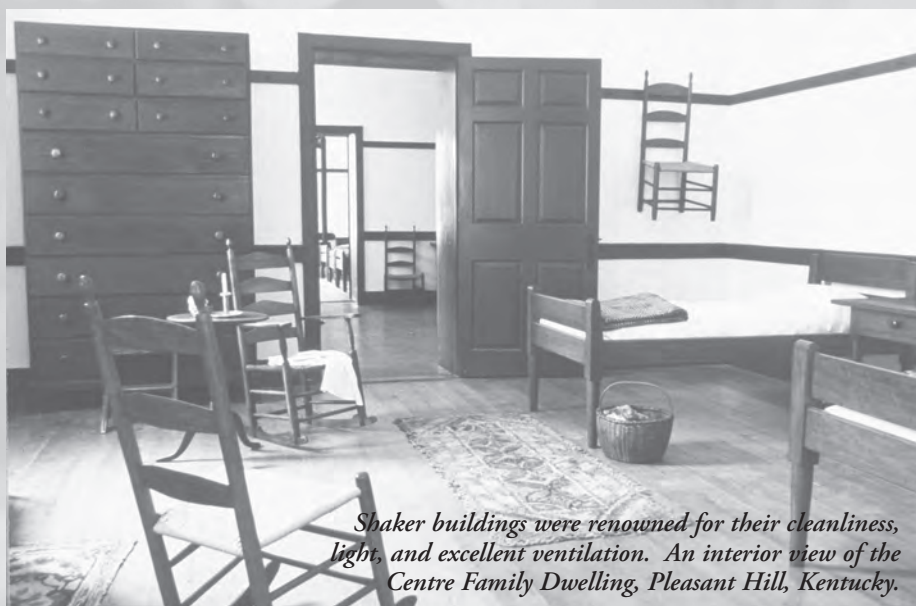
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ian diet, fresh air, and exercise, observed somewhat laconically that if Brother James had listened to him, he “would now be tending to his cows as usual instead of lying on his dying bed.”

The Shakers sisters at Harvard and Shirley communities in Massachusetts became friends with Harriot Hunt, the celebrated female physician of Boston. Reputed to be America’s first female medical doctor, Hunt practiced holistic medicine and believed that disease was often a manifestation of emotional trauma. Her treatment included taking “heart histories” from her patients, a remarkable foreshadowing of current mind/body approaches to health. Probably as a result of her contact with Dr. Hunt, Eldress Sally Loomis organized a series of meetings for the sisters at Harvard and Shirley where she read from *Lectures to Ladies on Anatomy and Physiology* by Mary Gove Nichols, a book intended to enlighten women about their bodies. Eldress Sally rejected the 19th century view of women as weak, prone to illness, and disinterested in scientific knowledge. She sought to promote an ideal of Shaker women as robust and healthy, knowledgeable and hardworking.

Yet another factor that likely contributed to the health and longevity of the Believers was the strong bonds of friendship that developed among members who worked and worshiped together for years. The overwhelming majority of Shakers who died in the faith lived their entire lives in the same community. Their journals and diaries attest to the support and comfort they derived from their brothers and sisters in the faith. Although personality conflicts and tensions within families were inevitable, Shakers nonetheless enjoyed a degree of social support that likely contributed to their good health. Crime was practically unheard of, further underscoring the relatively harmonious quality of their communal life. It is important to emphasize that membership in the United Society



Courtesy of Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill

Shaker buildings were renowned for their cleanliness, light, and excellent ventilation. An interior view of the Centre Family Dwelling, Pleasant Hill, Kentucky.

The Shakers Then and Now

The Shakers reached their peak population (estimated at close to 4000) around 1840, about 65 years after they came to America from England. All of the Shaker villages survived the Civil War. As the 19th century progressed, however, the Shakers found it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain members. In the early decades of the 20th century, entire villages closed while in others, a handful of aging members (mostly female) lived in buildings meant for hundreds. A number of Shaker communities have been restored and can be visited by interested readers. Today, the only remaining Shakers (two men and two women) live at the Sabbathday Lake Village in southern Maine.

of Believers was voluntary, and those who were able to embrace the discipline and tenets of the Shaker faith lived in a congenial atmosphere of temporal and spiritual security.

The latter point is significant. The Believers took comfort in the knowledge that their eternal future was secure. Although aspects of the Shaker faith could be seen as promoting feelings of guilt and shame for moral lapses, Shaker records are filled with statements attesting to their faith in a kind and loving God and their belief in an afterlife in which all Shaker families would be reunited. The Shakers, of course, had a long tradition of communication with the spirits of the dead and glorious visions of heaven gleaned through Shaker mediums.

The Shakers have much to teach us about the importance of lifestyle factors in promoting health and preventing dis-

ease. A wholesome diet, regular physical activity, hygienic practices, comprehensive health care, economic security, and social support combined with religious principles all contributed to their general good health and longevity. In short, the experience of the Shakers illustrates the importance of “community” for achieving good health. ❁

Susan Matarese is a Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Louisville and has long been interested in the Shakers. She is a member of the Communal Studies Association and serves on the Board of Directors of the Center for Communal Studies at the University of Southern Indiana. Paul Salmon, her husband, is a Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Louisville. His primary field of interest is health psychology.

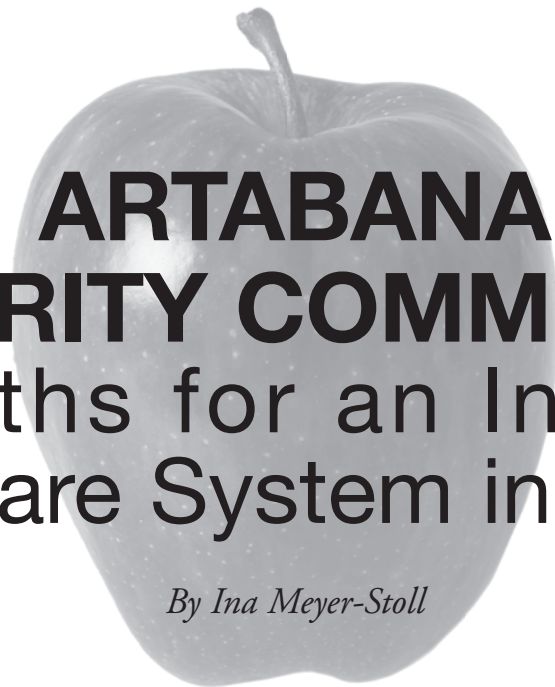
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ARTABANA SOLIDARITY COMMUNITIES: New Paths for an Integrated Health Care System in Germany

By Ina Meyer-Stoll

In Germany, most people are insured by official health insurance. The policies are very expensive, include a huge amount of bureaucracy, and don't cover all the alternative treatments. Many people are not content with the current insurance system, and with the pharmaceutical industry.

Here at ZEGG, we participate in an alternative health care system called Artabana. Based on my experiences with our local group, I am very enthusiastic about these solidarity communities. Similar networks could benefit many people within the US and elsewhere.

The Artabana network promotes and finances a health care system based on principles of freedom, responsibility, solidarity, transparency, and subsistence. Artabana is grounded in ideas of giving, sharing, and realizing a healthy, integrated lifestyle. The first groups were founded in Switzerland in 1987 by people inspired by Rudolf Steiner and Anthroposophy. Currently more than 105 Artabana groups exist in Germany.

The name Artabana derives from Artaban, the fourth king in *The Other Wise Man*, written by the American author Henry van Dyke in the 19th century. In the book, Artaban wanders through the country and cures people along his way for free.

Legally, Artabana communities either found a nonprofit association or form a company constituted under civil law. Volunteers do most of the administration. Artabana Solidarity Communities are not affiliated with any religious, economic, or political organizations.

How does it work?

The Artabana network consists of local solidarity communities connected in a national nonprofit association. People come together to support each other in health and sickness issues. They form small support groups, which we call solidarity communities, averaging five to 30 members with equal democratic rights. The groups meet regularly—for example, once a month. There is no alienation as in the current system; instead, by

knowing each other, people want to support each other more.

The members feel that every human being is an individual responsible for his/her own well-being.

All Artabana groups try to create the best conditions for individual health care through

- free choice of health care methods, including therapists, therapeutic institutions, and treatments,
- financial and other means of support to enable members to follow their individual path toward health and receive their chosen form of treatments,
- support to build a pluralistic system of health care that is adequate to the specific needs of people.

Each member takes care of his/her own health and financial needs in case of illness. Members decide independently about the different possible treatments and needed therapies. Each member designs his/her own annual budget for all expenses concerning health and well-being. Sixty percent of it is used individually, and 40 percent goes into the local support fund. In this way, all local communities create their own surplus from which unexpected expenses can be covered.

In earlier years, the local communities also fed the national solidarity fund of the German association. These extra funds are available in times of financial distress due to health emergencies like severe accidents or prolonged stays in hospitals. Today the national fund holds reserves of about 100,000 Euro. If the local funds are insufficient or depleted, other Artabana communities from the nearby region will be contacted and asked for financial support. And in unexpected emergency cases, the national funds are accessible. Combined, all Artabana communities in Germany have about 1.3 million Euro in various kinds of support funds.

This is the principle of subsistence and decentralisation. The individual and the local community will cover what the local group is able to cover, then the regional alliances will be requested, and finally the national security funds will be tapped

into when necessary. Support is given as a donation depending on the decision of the group.

It is important to note that contributing members do not acquire any legal rights to receive money or other support from the group unless agreed upon by said group. This is another difference between conventional insurance and an Artabana solidarity group.

Right now on the national level the hot issue is that according to a new German law all German citizens need to be insured by official health insurance. Until now, Artabana communities have not been recognized as official insurance. This is in agreement with our own perception of our communities. We don't want to be "normal health insurance"; we see ourselves as a network of solidarity communities. However, the Artabana network would like to be regarded equally to health insurance. Official discussions of this case are ongoing and will take time. If the Artabana communities are officially recognized as something similar to health insurance, we will celebrate the wisdom of the politicians. If not, Artabana will continue anyhow. It is possible to buy private health insurance and still be part of the local Artabana group.

This is a way that some people use Artabana already; they have "official insurance" and in addition they join an Artabana

group because it offers the connection to people and interesting discussions about health and integrated well-being.

How does ZEGG do it?

At ZEGG each individual is responsible for his/her health insurance. We have an agreement that all members must be insured and everybody can choose which system is serving her/him best.

In 2002 one ZEGG member heard about the expanding

Artabana network in Germany and founded the first Artabana community at ZEGG with five people. Since then the group has

met continuously, growing to 20 members at one point; today we are 18. In our neighbourhood we now have two other Artabana communities, and at least once a year we meet in the three groups to celebrate and exchange our experiences. More Artabana communities have sprung up in the wider region, which includes Berlin and Potsdam.

My Artabana group meets once a month. We discuss our own states of health, look over personal budgets, and talk about new interesting treatments. One issue can be that someone has had an unexpected treatment at the hospital and asks the group for financial support. During the early existence of our Artabana community at ZEGG, we were able to accumulate

My Artabana group meets once a month to discuss our own states of health, look over personal budgets, and talk about new interesting treatments.



Photo courtesy of Ina Meyer-Stoll

some money, which wasn't spent yet. So we invested in a photovoltaic unit at ZEGG, made some donations, and saved money for unexpected costs. Some years ago I had several complicated treatments at the dentist and overspent my annual budget. We discussed this in our meetings and I asked for a donation. I also promised to raise my budget from the next year on. I received the donation and raised my budget. There is no "right" to receive money, but we want to create abundance so we often support each other. And of course I need to pay attention to my personal budget and be responsible for all my expenses.

We have one bookkeeper in our group; he administers our Artabana group account and its involved finances. He works mostly voluntarily; we pay just a small annual fee towards the administration. No extra costs are involved and we have full transparency of what is happening with our money. We decide together what to do with our surplus, how much we want to invest in other projects, and how much we want to save.

If I have expenses, I pre-finance them and will be reimbursed by our Artabana bank account. All members transfer their monthly contributions to this account and get their reimbursement. In alignment with our principles, more than 95 percent of all Artabana bank accounts in Germany are connected to an ethical bank, which has a similar background of solidarity as Artabana.

In January each member presents his/her annual budget to the group. I estimate how much I will spend on physicians, therapy, medicine, treatments, and health in general, including my contribution to the reserve funds. Let's say these expenses total 120 Euro per month, or 1440 Euro per year. I can spend 60 percent of this budget (864 Euro) for my personal needs. The other 40 percent goes to our local reserve funds, which are 576 Euro in my case.

Our group so far has been able to cover all our financial requests out of our own resources. Throughout the network, in most cases, local funds are able to cover unexpected costs completely, and the national Artabana funds are used only rarely—only three to five times in the average year.

The national nonprofit association of Artabana Germany (where our local group as well as all other Artabana groups are

members) meets twice a year and we always send a representative to these meetings.

Are there any disadvantages? Not that I know of. You just need a certain amount of time and goodwill to start. Of course you will get to know various sides of all members; you will have to face the reality that some people may have difficulties overseeing their budgets and have issues with money. This is part of the community-building process. The model includes creating transparency and openness in questions of health and lifestyle. I find this crucially important: not to stand alone with all my questions and needs concerning health issues.

For me there are so many advantages: I feel free to invest my money in medicine I believe in and treatments I trust. I also invest in social contacts, which is an important aspect of this model. Artabana offers a lot of freedom to invest in my well-being and to share with friends

about a healthier lifestyle. We also communicate about our experiences with different physicians and practitioners. For this we started a database to list addresses of different doctors and health workers. I learn from others' experiences and I can try new treatments recommended by members.

Several German intentional communities and ecovillages have founded their own local Artabana solidarity communities. This does not mean that all members are part of Artabana, but quite many are.

I hope you will feel inspired by our experience and start a network in your region.

For more details, see www.artabana.de (German only) and www.zegg.de. ❁

*I feel free to invest my money in medicine
I believe in and treatments I trust.*



Ina Meyer-Stoll has lived in community for 25 years now. She was one of the founding members of the ecovillage ZEGG, where she has been active in various ways since 1991. For several years she was executive secretary of the Global Ecovillage Network of Europe (www.gen-europe.org). She has been a communications trainer and supervisor for almost 20 years, specializing in building community and creating transparency and trust in group processes. She also offers ZEGG Forum training in the US.

The ZEGG Forum: A Personal Process in a Social Context

The ZEGG Forum is an awareness and transparency process for groups. It is an artistic way of personal sharing, a stage for what is happening inside us, a place for radical feedback and clarifying unsolved situations. It encourages us to bring forth our true motivations, our deep feelings, longings, ideas, and emotions. It offers transparency and cohesion for groups, and personal growth, empowerment, and healing for individuals. It was developed 30 years ago by ZEGG.

In 2010, Ina Meyer-Stoll and Achim Ecker will be conducting Intensive Forum Trainings in New York and California (see ad on p. 8), with the goal of training Forum facilitators for the US. Participants will get to know the Forum's methods and underlying ideas/world view, while developing their own deep inner listening, presence, and tools for healing relationships.



Healing Work in a Healing Biotope

An interview with Dr. Amélie Weimar

By Stephen Davis



*Top: Communitarian ritual and prayer to bless the land for the implementation of a Stone Circle in Tamera, 2004.
Bottom: The growing water landscape with surrounding permaculture is part of the ecological healing work for the land in Tamera.*

Dr. Amélie Weimar received her M.D. degree from Freie Universität Berlin in 1991, and since 1995 she has been responsible for the medical needs of 200 people living in the community of Tamera in southern Portugal. She was interviewed earlier this year by Stephen Davis. (Stephen's italicized questions are followed by Amélie's responses below.)

•••

Dr. Weimar, the first thing we need to know...exactly what is a "healing biotope?"

By "healing biotope," we mean an intentional community of people, animals, and plants mutually enhancing each others' life energy—a place where those energies are no longer restricted by fear or violence.

And Tamera is such a "healing biotope?"

I wouldn't want to say we have achieved that status fully yet, but we're consciously working on it and evolving toward it. Tamera is actually the latest community experiment in a 30-year history of research about the creation of a true healing biotope.

So what makes healing work in a healing biotope different from anywhere else?

Our whole research and work is guided by the question, "What serves healing?" This includes healing on all levels—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually; and it is not only an individual question for us. We also ask: What serves the healing of a whole community? What creates healing in the relationship between the genders? Between humans and nature? And going even further on a political level, what serves the healing between cultures—for example, between Israelis and Palestinians, Germans and Jews?

We work on many levels of healing, but I would say that our main healing work has to take place here (in the head) and here (in the heart) and here (in the sexual chakra)—which means in our attitude towards life and to each other, in our patterns of thinking and believing, and in our human relations.

But to focus more directly on the question of healing for individuals...

I would say there are some major factors that make a difference in Tamera. Just to be clear, our healing work is virtually all homeopathic and not allopathic. Homeopathy and other alternative methods that we use are important tools that support healing, and I definitely don't want to skip over them; but our main interest is directed to the human story behind the disease—and these stories are always there in the background.

What do mean by these "background stories?"

I mean the blocked life energies from fear or violence, for example, that created an environment in the body in which a disease could manifest. Our experience has shown that illnesses are caused by inner movements or impulses that get stuck in our body because they do not find a channel to be expressed. These stuck energies then cause inflammation. So it's not the bacteria or parasites that might be found with the inflammation that are causing the disease. This is why the question of infection is also only of secondary interest to us. Acute infection can only happen if the inner condition or disposition in the body is there. Chronic diseases also come from the chronic blockage of life energies.

Unfortunately, it's not uncommon in a society like ours that



Tim



Maria Soares

Photo courtesy of Tamera



Photo courtesy of Tamera

We have not been taught to show ourselves as we are, to show our longings, or to trust each other.

many of our life energies are blocked. Basically, we have not been taught to show ourselves as we are, to show our longings, or to trust each other. As a result of our history as individuals, but also as members of humanity, we are full of inner collisions—or you could say inner conflicts—between, for example, the voice of our body and the thoughts in our head.

Can you explain that a little more?

For example, if a man—an executive in business, let's say—listens to a certain piece of music, he could break down into tears because it touches him so much. That is the voice of his body. But he is supposed to be a serious adult; so the thoughts come, "I am strong and experienced in life; I should not cry, should not show this part of myself; others will think that I am weak, or see me as a softie."

Or let's say that a woman sees a man and her body says that she would really like to disappear behind the next bush and have sex with him. But her thoughts ask, "What would my mother think about me? What will other women think? And what will he think? Is it better that I play the shy and helpless woman with romantic ambitions who says 'No' three times until he makes the first step?"

All these fears and thoughts of morality cause a huge amount of un-lived life in all of us. Whether we get physically sick or not is only a matter of degree.

Can you give a specific example of this from a case you've had?

Yes. I'll use my own case... Twenty years ago, when I first visited the annual Summer Camp of this project, I completely fell in love with the people, the community life, and the truthful way they were together. When I had to leave to go back to

Clockwise from left: Trust means that you can show yourself the way you are, and what and whom you love.

"Sometimes in our clinic I do not give any remedies to the client but ask him to go and pray and ask for his next steps."

Art is a very important medium in Tamera.

Tamera's Horse Project works for a new healing contact between humans and animals.



*If I really want to work for healing,
I have to help create different life
conditions for people.*

study, I got one disease after another until I had to go to the hospital. Only when I decided that I would visit the project again did the illnesses stop. I—as an aspiring doctor—noticed that my inner conflict had caused all this disease, and not the bacteria as I had been taught.

Thank you. You said there were other main factors that are different in your healing work in Tamera. What's the next one?

The second one is that outside of the community, when people get sick, they go to the doctor—or even to an alternative healer—and receive treatment; but then as soon as they leave, they go back into the same environment—the same structures at home and at work, or, frankly, in their community—that produced the disease in the first place. They are forced to close up again. For real healing, we have found that we need to create a different environment, different structures, for that person to live in on a daily basis.

This is one reason that I stepped into this project nearly 20 years ago. During my medical studies and work in hospitals, I saw that we doctors are not really able to heal people. I saw many who came back again and again with the same or new symptoms. I knew that if I really want to work for healing, I have to help create different life conditions for people.

What “conditions” are you talking about?

We have found that *trust* is the strongest healing force we can create. Trust means that you can show yourself the way you are, and what and whom you love—where you do not have to hide and play a role or a masquerade any more, but be who you really are. To reach our real selves we often have to go through many layers and protective shields we have created during our lives in order to survive—layers of mistrust, anger, frustration, disappointment, envy, and disbelief. We might think “that” is



who we are, that the truth is that we are full of mistrust, for example. But it is important to know, “that” is not me. These are sediments out of a sick civilization that lay upon my real inner being. If I reach through these layers with the help of others, with art, with Forum and so on—then I come to my *real* being, my real truth.

Sorry to interrupt...what is “Forum?”

The Forum is perhaps our most powerful and effective healing tool. It is simply a dedicated circle of people, where someone goes into the middle to show themselves. It often takes the form of a performance, as the person offers their innermost feelings, desires, and thoughts for the others to see. After all, one of the greatest longings of each of us is to be truly seen for who we are by others, and accepted by them without judgment. It is also an opportunity to de-identify with our individual problems and look at ourselves as research projects trying to solve issues for the human race as a whole. While working on

Left: We are cosmic beings. Healing means to reconnect with this truth.

This photo: Waking-up call with music during the Summer University.

Bottom right: Creating real trust between men and women is one of the most important healing tasks.



Photo courtesy of Tamera



my own healing and my own solution, I work on the healing of many other people, because it is not only the un-lived life in me but also in millions of others that waits for redemption.

And this process builds trust among the community?

In our experience, yes. We know that the more we get to know someone—I mean, really know someone deep down—the more we will like them and trust them. We would experience this again and again in our community over the years. I have personally witnessed that a space of trust, where someone suddenly feels able to speak out his or her current inner conflict, can immediately heal a tonsillitis, cystitis, severe inflammation of the abdomen, unbearable toothache, and so on. Often it is enough that the person just speaks out about the issues in order let the self-healing powers do their work, even if the issue is not solved yet. That is why I say that trust is the universal remedy for healing.

Again, can you give us a case history?

One woman in the community had severe tonsillitis; she could hardly swallow or speak. In a healing circle, when asked where she had spent the night before the tonsillitis started, she answered, “It was my first night with my new lover;” and her face turned red. She obviously felt very embarrassed, and after a long time she finally admitted she was afraid he would find her too fat when he saw her naked. After she had spoken out this simple fear in the group, the tonsillitis disappeared the next day. For her it was a process of trusting that she could show herself honestly, even with all her fears. When she did that, her life energies were no longer stuck and the tonsillitis was no longer necessary.

Thank you. So now we've covered a couple reasons why you believe that healing work in Tamera is different. Is there anything else?

Yes, and perhaps the most important, and the most radical and controversial. Over the past 30 years of research that has gotten us this far as a community, we have found that there is one main issue that lies under all the rest and is therefore responsible for most of the blocked energies that cause disease. So we focus on this issue in our healing work and in our community life.

And that issue is...

The issue of love and sexuality. There is perhaps no more blocked life energy in our society than that of love and sexuality. It's historically the most injured area of life, which is why it has to be in the center of our healing work. Humanity suffers from a collective love sickness. The wounds human beings have inflicted on each other in this area are very deep. We have all been born into this situation and cannot heal it privately.

This is probably one of the core reasons why this project was created over 30 years ago. Our founder, Dieter Duhm, has

Photo courtesy of Tamera



Photo courtesy of Tamera



Photo courtesy of Tamera



Before going to the hospital I wanted to try every other possibility, so I crawled to the Forum. I revealed that I was in love with two men and had no idea how I could fully love both without losing one of them.

often said that there can never be peace on earth as long as there is war between man and woman.

How do you work on this?

What's important first is to understand the scope and historical dimension of this issue in order to know that my personal questions and problems in this area are also not private. We study history, including old cultures in which love and sexuality were still positively integrated in community life. On the practical level, we use the Forum; we have special healing and art courses—art is a very important medium in Tamera; and we are about to open a school for healing in love. There, spiritual training will be an important element. Without spiritual and theoretical training, the intensity of this issue would overwhelm us as soon as we approached the associated trauma. We realize that the energy of sexuality alone requires study and training to deal with it.

Can you give us another real-life example?

Some years ago I had severe intestinal pain on the right side for a few days without any relief and thought that I had appendicitis and needed an operation. But before going to the hospital I wanted to try every other possibility, so I crawled to the Forum. I revealed that I was in love with two men and had no idea how I could fully love both without losing one of them. Later, in a smaller healing circle, Dieter Duhm guided me into a meditation with the picture of sinking deeper and deeper into water. When I was 80 meters down, I had become so calm that I could see that there was not any real conflict at all, and how I could fully live my love with both men. The next day my “appendicitis” was gone.

Do you heal all diseases this way?

I have witnessed again and again how suddenly healing can happen, and often to my surprise. Other times, a disease did not respond for a while in spite of all our ideas, our Forums, and healing work. But this is also part of our ongoing research. I am convinced that sometimes a disease has to stay longer in order to enable our soul and our mind to really complete its healing process and not to return too quickly to old patterns of living and working as soon as we have the physical power again. In this sense diseases are often big gifts for us, an important trigger point in our development, if we understand and accept



*Left page top: Community meeting.
 Left page middle: Forum performance.
 Left page bottom: Growing up in trust.
 This page top: Tamera on pilgrimage in Israel/Palestine, walking for reconciliation.
 This page middle: A group gets introduced to the Stone Circle of Tamera.
 This page bottom: Tamera.*

Photo courtesy of Tamera

them as this.

In fact, sometimes in our clinic I do not give any remedies to the client but ask him to go and pray and ask for his next steps—in love, in sexuality, in the community, in his profession—depending on the topic that we can see behind the disease.

It's not always easy, when we're in pain, to see our suffering as a "gift"...

You're right. Even if we already know that disease is caused by inner collisions or conflicts that want to be solved, we still tend to think, "Oh, I did something wrong. Now I am punished with a disease for this mistake." Whether we are religious or not, we are still so influenced by a thinking system of sin and punishment that this thought is often quicker than all our new knowledge. But the disease is there to bring us to healing, to show us the way towards a solution. The symptoms that our body produces can often be an attempt by our body to help us solve the conflict. We call the symptoms "disease"—which we consider as something bad; but actually these are healing impulses that our body sends to help us grow. Since normal allopathic medicine mostly tries to suppress all symptoms as soon as possible, most people never come to the experience that their disease was actually a healing process that could have served their growth. ❁

An author and Physician's Assistant trained in Chiropractic, Stephen Davis has been living in Tamera since April 2008. For more information about Tamera, visit www.tamera.org.



Elias Barrasch



Elias Barrasch

The True Need for Community

By Joshua Canter



Photos by Joshua Canter

When I was 18 years old, I went through a period of searching. Often I would awake at night, my mind racing and continual thoughts flooding my consciousness. Questions would arise: “What am I doing with my life? Where are people like me? What is happening to the Earth? When will I understand?” With long nights of contemplation and meditation, the same answer kept arising, from a voice that began as a whisper then got louder and more insistent. The answer was “community.”

This personal realization catapulted me out into the world on a mission to explore community. I wanted to know, “Could community be the key to my searching in life? Could it meet the needs I haven’t been able to meet on my own?”

Dr. Marshall Rosenberg, the founder of Nonviolent Communication, talks about the core needs of all humans. He suggests that, in order to be healthy and fulfilled, humans must have “support and connection.” One of the key attributes of a life in community is the variety of ways in which we can help one another. Often our well-being benefits from reaching out to one another within the communities we are part of, whether family, church, neighborhood, or ecovillage. When we are in need, it is a true gift to have community available to help us.

Over the past 15 years, since I left Los Angeles, I have met numerous people with experiences similar to mine. They have all expressed feeling a void in their lives, and a need for the connection and support described by Dr. Rosenberg. They have all found that their personal needs could not be met solely by themselves, their spouse, or a couple of friends. They have realized that they need a community of people. Through my experience, I have discovered that when I have a network of community around me, I have the potential to truly flourish, to be healthy and fulfilled, and to nurture my well-being physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

In the early 1960s, Roseto, Pennsylvania, a small American town, became the focus of various medical studies. Roseto was a normal, run-of-the-mill small town. But within Roseto the people were found to be some of the healthiest in the country. Researchers found very low rates of heart disease and heart attacks, and no incidents of alcoholism or suicide. After various extensive studies, the researchers were surprised when the results of their tests showed that the high levels of wellness in the town came from nothing more

than a strong sense of community.

Three years ago, my grandmother of 82 had a major stroke, which the doctors said would take her life. A few days after the stroke, we received a call in the middle of the night at my mother’s house. The doctor told us to hurry to the hospital, because my grandmother was going to pass. Our family rushed to the hospital, uniting in the Intensive Care Unit. As we entered the room with my grandmother, we created a semi-circle around her bed. I held one of her hands. My grandfather, on the other side of the bed, held her other hand. Together we breathed, sending healing energy and love to her. As we stood together as a family unit, the strongest community there is, her vitals began to pick up, and she came back to life. The doctors told us in the days following that it was only the power of the circle of family that saved her.

Studies throughout the last half-century in the US have found similar results, proving that the element of community is one of the greatest factors in healing and healthy living. From heart disease to cancer, depression, and life longevity, all have shown significant positive effects when the patient has a network of community.

At the core of the human DNA we are 99.9 percent identical. Only a minute .1 percent difference separates us within our species. Through being part of community, we can learn more about the common vision of the human race, while exploring ways to work with the differences that at times can divide us. Community is a great tool to help us explore our emotional needs. In community we have a chance to look at ourselves and to see the reflection of others around us. Being in community is often represented by the metaphor of rocks in a river. Each person in the community is a rock, and through the process of being together, we rub against one another until we are

smooth. Fifteen years ago, and numerous moments since then, I can remember being in a difficult time in my life. In each instance, the support and connection of others has lifted me up, given me perspective on my situation, and helped me grow from an experience of hardship. Joules Graves, an incredible singer/songwriter, says it best: "There is very little that separates Alone from All One." At times, the .1 percent that separates the human race can seem more like 100 percent, but in the most difficult of times, when we need someone the most, our community is there to support us.

The Buddha, speaking thousands of years ago, described the sangha, "the spiritual community," as one of the three most important elements in life. The sangha's purpose is to be a pillar of support, displaying ways of being which encourage our dharma, our higher purpose in life. Within this philosophy, the sangha helps the community as they explore their well-being as a whole, while the sangha also supports each individual in explor-

ing the spiritual self. For these reasons, spiritual communities are some of the strongest communities. From churches to synagogues, ashrams to monasteries, when people gather together to commune for a "higher purpose," differences disappear, and a stronger force guides the community as one. A sense of connection to a whole, a community, a greater purpose outside oneself, can be the key to meeting spiritual needs in life.

Not only is community an important tool to help meet the needs of people, but the people are also the glue holding together the needs of the community. Over the years, I have discovered that "the people" in a community are the key to the success and well-being of the community itself. We can build a fully sustainable community that will support us, and if we do not have the tools to live and work together in harmony, we will not survive as a community. At True Nature, the intentional community where I live in Costa Rica, I notice this principle first hand. True Nature is located in a thriv-

ing environment, with various elements which support the sustainability and well-being of our community. Even with all of these elements, without the people in the community, and our commitment to healthy collaboration, our community would not exist.

Being part of community is a conscious choice we all can make. Community is all around us, even in places we might not expect it. The most important thing to remember is that "humanity" is here for you. We all have needs in this life and we are not alone. Open your heart and mind to the healing power of community, and community will find you. ❁



Joshua Canter 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 cofounder of the True Nature Community and Education Center (truenaturecommunity.org) in Costa Rica. Through his work he hopes to help people discover how they can create ways of holistic living filled with connection, support, and interdependence. For more information contact Joshua: Joshua@truenaturecommunity.org.

A sense of connection to a whole, a community, a greater purpose outside oneself, can be the key to meeting spiritual needs in life.





Community Cured My Asthma and Allergies

By Mandy Creighton

I was born with chronic asthma. My dad had it when he was a child, and outgrew it by age 14 or so. Everybody thought that's what would happen with me too. Throughout my childhood, my mom would come into my room at night and put her hand just over my mouth to make sure I was breathing. While most moms do this to their babies, this continued for my mom throughout my youth and adolescence... she was constantly worried. At age eight, on winter holiday break from school, I went to the hospital for several days to get some breathing treatments and go on an IV so that I could simply breathe. As long as I can remember, I took inhalers, nasal sprays, pills, steroids, and antihistamines. My asthma was "allergy-induced," meaning any of the things I was allergic to would trigger a full-fledged asthma

attack. This included mainly pet dander and mold, but also seasonal allergens, trees, perfumes, scented laundry soap, and more. Our household was one of those sterile environments with NOTHING scented...even candles and cut grass could trigger an attack.

I was in and out of the doctor's office for the newest drug treatments available for asthmatics about once a year. We relied on the pediatrician for all advice for how to manage my asthma and for regular prescriptions. Other than keeping scented things out of the house, and staying away from moldy basements and cats, I just had to live with my asthma and allergies. There was no "cure," just ways to manage it with drugs, doctors, and a regular dose of my mother's worry.

When I was a teenager, the symptoms began to subside a little. I didn't need

my emergency inhaler much, and was able to go off of one of the prescriptions. So I was down to two prescriptions and carried an inhaler for emergencies. I kept an over-the-counter nasal spray around, but only had to use that in fall and spring when seasonal allergies peaked. Then college came and the whole "sterile environment" thing sort of disappeared. This, and my need to experiment with drugs and alcohol, came at the cost of my asthma coming back full-fledged... even worse at times. When I realized what was happening, I tried to find ways to keep away from cats and mold, and apply all the principles that my folks had raised me with in order to "manage" the asthma. I got back on prescription medications and regular doctor visits.

The thing I never considered was doing away with asthma and allergies altogether.

In 2004 my allergies had become increasingly bad every year and I was starting to get chronic sinus infections each fall, putting me out of work for sometimes weeks at a time. My asthma was triggered by everything and anything, and I found myself using an emergency inhaler again. I started going for allergy shots, and got on a higher dose of Advair. In the fall of 2005 I got very sick and landed in the hospital again, just as in 1986: breathing treatments, IV, sinus infection. Wasn't I supposed to have outgrown this?

I finally woke up.

Something from deep inside me said, "Why are you relying on the same treatment and the same wisdom to heal you, when it hasn't worked in the past?" Isn't that Einstein's definition of insanity: trying something over and over and expecting different results? As if someone had smacked me on the back of the head with a 2 x 4, I decided after that hospital stay that I needed something to change...everything really needed to change. I was leading a life of stress and lack of deep connection...of trying to help everybody else, and leaving myself out of the process.

And that's when I realized the true reason I'd had no success "curing" my asthma. I hadn't opened my heart to

the possibility of actually being cured completely. I was the one suffering from asthma and couldn't see a way out for myself. I was relying on my own lack of knowledge...which is not the most reliable source.

So I started asking questions of anybody I knew who had allergies or asthma: "What do you do to help yourself?" "Is there a non-chemical way to manage asthma attacks?" "Do you know of any holistic doctors in the area?" And the answers came flooding in. I would sit down to read a magazine and open to an article on holistic health treatments for sinus infections, or I would be in the line at the grocery store and happen to learn about a yoga exercise that is good for asthmatics. I would be in my worship group and someone would mention a new holistic doctor who had come to town. I had simply opened myself up to the *possibility* that another path existed, and asked my *community* for support, and this allowed all signs and answers to be revealed. By the end of the month, the cupboard that used to contain inhalers, prescription medications, a nebulizer, and every over-the-counter antihistamine and pill you can imagine, now held a lavender neck wrap, neti pot, various essential oils, a back scratcher (yes, stress can cause an asthma attack!), and some recipes for natural tea blends. I went from weekly allergy shots that caused me to feel worse afterward, to weekly chiropractic adjustments and massage that left me feeling lighter and breathing easier. My diet changed to eating local organic foods that I grew or harvested at the local CSA, I started walking every day with the dog and lost 60 lbs., I sought counseling to help me through my divorce, and I began regular visits to an applied kinesiology chiropractor. Now, it's been over four years and I haven't had a chronic sinus infection in fall, and haven't taken a single prescription medication to help manage my asthma or allergies.

I've now come to learn that if babies are given the proper care from birth, including chiropractics, massage, and even Reiki and other things that only a
(continued on p. 75)

Some Natural Ways to Manage Your Asthma and Allergies

- Use a neti pot daily.
- Do yoga breathing to keep airways open and healthy.
- Eat local...you're essentially ingesting the pollens that you're allergic to, but not directly, so this helps self-immunize.
- When you have an asthma attack, boil a gallon of water, put in a bowl and add about 4 drops of German Chamomile essential oil. Put a towel over your head and bend over the bowl to slowly breathe in the vapors.
- Put some Eucalyptis Radiata essential oil in your bathtub, or simply rub a little on your chest at night.
- Exercise! Find something that you love and do it as often as you can...bicycling, gardening, walking, drumming, swimming, etc.
- Most importantly, ASK OTHERS FOR HELP. Someone has probably been through what you're going through, and simply needs to be asked for advice.



This balancing rock sculpture represents the Divine Trinity: The Universal Father, The Infinite Mother Spirit, and The Eternal Son. It is a meditation of balance and patience to create. Throughout Avalon Gardens you will see these rock sculptures which are designed to create a sacred atmosphere.

Want to Be a Healer? Be a Creek!

By Niánn Emerson Chase

At Global Community Communications Alliance (GCCA) we approach healing with the same community spirit as we approach everything else. Our healing team works primarily through the Soulistic Medical Institute (a supporting affiliate of GCCA), experiencing many opportunities to serve both community members and the public. While we use standard medicine when necessary and unavoidable, we prefer the more holistic and soulistic methods of healing.

We have discovered that physical and psychospiritual healing has to do with a shift in the mind, in the thought processes of the individual. Thus we are actively seeking *healing* versus *curing* of illness. Healing has to do with the whole person; curing, by contrast, focuses on making the physical symptoms go away without consideration of psychospiritual, cultural, social, and environmental factors. We observe that too many doctors and the other facets of health care really aren't in the ministry of healing; they are in the business of curing. For example, a surgeon can successfully remove a physical tumor, but not deal with the various factors that may have contributed to that tumor. Nor do most surgeons follow up by having the patient implement holistic preventative and health-promoting practices. Neither do they deal with the emotions and mind of the individual, the thought processes that lead to so many decisions that affect health. And, even if a doctor wants to be more holistic, most insurance companies will pay for surgery but not for the additional health-promoting and preventative follow-up treatment.

Most of us who are community members in GCCA feel that we are in an accelerated process of healing. Whether accelerated or more gradual, healing can be very challenging, intense, and psychologically (as well as physically) painful. Though I see my entire life as a process of continued healing and unfolding into more expanded wholeness, I went through an extremely challenging period of a few years of intense healing, struggling with physical symptoms that were scary, very uncomfortable, and at

times almost unbearably painful. In order for me to get through my physical condition and actually heal, I had to deal with lots of personal psychospiritual issues, at an accelerated pace, if I was going to physically survive.

Though today I am no longer able to ride a bicycle many miles or hike up to 15 miles a day, I can hike and walk up to four miles and swim lots of laps. Though my physical vehicle (body) won't allow me to do as many activities as I enjoyed in the past, at 61 I realize that I am healthier than I have ever been in my entire life. In my "letting-go" of many of my attachments,

I became free of a lot of mindal pressure that contributed to tremendous stress on my physical body and culminated in a serious

*When I finally slowed down enough to listen,
I realized that if I did not stop racing around being a
superwoman, I would go crazy.*

physical illness.

Being a product of the dominant culture's fast and frantic pace, I was a person who moved quickly through life, experiencing much and living with many changes throughout my youth and adulthood. For decades I was on a fast-track in acquiring an undergraduate- and graduate-college education, exploring various religious practices, befriending many people of various walks of life, and raising three children while I worked with dedication (teaching up to 125 students a day when I was in the public school system). For a time I lived with the challenge of being a single parent and managing the family, home, and profession—all, of course, at a maddeningly fast pace.

Though I was a deeply spiritual person, I was not deep enough, for I was in too much of a hurry getting things done, pursuing many personal agendas, and so on. When I finally slowed down enough to really listen to the call of the Spirit within me, I realized that if I did not stop racing around being a superwoman, I would go crazy. In that slowing down and quieting myself and listening to what I refer to as "the call of God," I was able to begin to allow certain doors to open that led to a series of events that ended up where I am today—living in a wonderful intentional community, having a lifestyle that is fulfilling and nourishing on all levels of being, and thriving in a highly meaningful avocation. It was not until I was living in an

active intentional community, where my ideals could be practiced more fully in a life of wholeness and connection (rather than in compartments), that I really began the hard work of accelerated healing that, interestingly, seemed to me at the same time to be restful and playful.

So it was a wonderful thing that happened to me when, about 12 years ago, I was bed-ridden for more than three months. During that time my heart beat very slowly, and I could not even get up to walk to the bathroom. It seemed as if my heart was saying, “I am not going to beat any faster than this, and this is the way it is. So, get with this new program, lady!” I’m sure that there are some medical theories as to why my heart slowed down, but more important to me are the psychospiritual reasons. I had to be slowed down so that I could be very present to hear that small, quiet voice of God, which really isn’t very small at all. It can be quite loud if you are listening.

I needed to be forced to sit in a circle of quiet for a lot longer than five minutes, or 20 minutes, or a day. In that circle of quiet where I lived for those months, I became enlightened and aware of some unresolved issues, some incorrect perceptions, and some ego “stuff.” I also realized that I had been living for most of my life with deep, smoldering anger and resentment. And I thought I had gotten a handle on all of that when I was in my 30s!

Believing that I am a person who has had a few past lives, it seemed that I had many lifetime chapters, many layers of experiences where I, as a woman on this Earth, had been broken and beaten down by oppressive and abusive people and circumstances, although, interestingly, I have not experienced oppression in this

current life. In order for me to heal, my resentment and anger (no matter where it came from) had to be addressed and dispelled, or transformed into something productive and helpful. As I discovered, resentment is simply unexpressed anger and, if not appropriately and effectively expressed, anger can sit deep inside you and manifest in some sort of physical disease, even coming through in a next life.

Because I lived in a community culture that encouraged deep reflection and inner work on transmuting incorrect and harmful thought-forms and patterns, and because I had the physical and emotional support of fellow community members,

all those years ago I was able to “retreat” for more than three months within the community setting—in my own bed—to rest, reflect, process, release, and acquiesce. I began to heal and transform, and I continue to unfold more fully into my wholeness, outgrowing that which I no longer need in order to ever expand into a more loving, insightful, and wise person.

In the wonderful diversity of persons living in Global Community Communications Alliance, we are reminded daily that each one of us is undergoing an ongoing, personal, and unique healing process. We believe that in order for our

In that circle of quiet where I lived for those months, I realized that I had been living for most of my life with deep, smoldering anger and resentment.

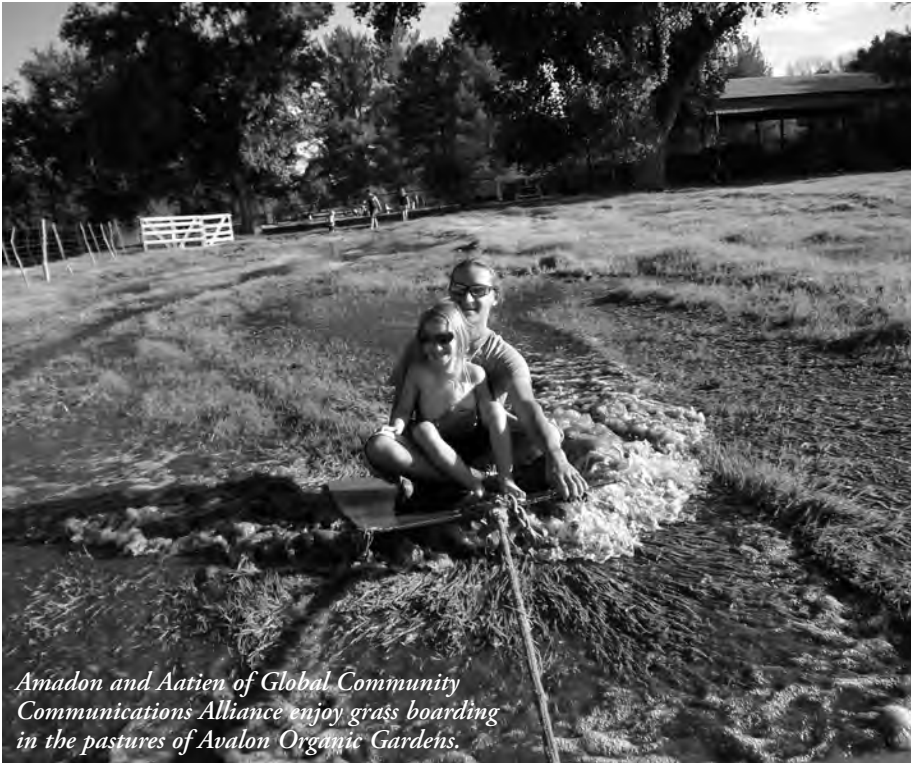
*Left photo: Ascendia of Global Community Communications Alliance displays a freshly harvested squash from Avalon Organic Gardens.
This photo: Ascendia and SanSkritA of Global Community Communications Alliance at a Fall Harvest Celebration.*



Amadon DellErba



Amadon DellErba



Amadon and Aatien of Global Community Communications Alliance enjoy grass boarding in the pastures of Avalon Organic Gardens.



Marita Seen and her daughter Denere of Global Community Communications Alliance.



In order to feel our union with others, we must realize that we all need to heal, and that healing is an ongoing process.

planet to heal, a unity (not uniformity) needs to happen on a global level. But in order for us to begin to feel that union with others—that union of souls within our uniqueness and our diversity—we must realize that what we all have in common is our need to heal, and that healing is an ongoing process.

From the very beginning, our experiment in community has emphasized creating an environment that in every way supports healing and health. Beautiful homes and gardens, tasty organic food, clean water, fresh air, diverse and satisfying work, a strong connection with the natural world, time and tools for creativity, commitment to doing good for others, practicing clear communication, healthy diversion and recreation, a dynamic spiritual life, and a willingness to do the work necessary for healing to occur are all important to us.

So far, the experiment begun in 1989 has borne many fruits of healing for community members, even though some of those community members have even-

tually passed on. And all along the beautiful healing journeys that we continue to experience, we are reminded by one of our Elders: “Want to be a healer? Then first heal yourself by becoming as a creek—always dynamic, flowing, moving, and cleansing.” ❁



Niánn Emerson Chase is an internationally-known spiritual leader, published author, educator, and activist, and is cofounder of Global Community Communications Alliance—

located in southern Arizona in the historic southwest towns of Tubac and Tumacácori. Global Community Communications Alliance is a church supporting a religious order and ecovillage of more than 100 international members living in community on a 165-acre ranch, garden, and farm (www.globalcommunitycommunicationsalliance.org).

COMMUNITY AND HEALTH: Immigrant Senior Cohousing in the Netherlands

By Dorit Fromm and Els de Jong

All photos courtesy of Anand Joti



When cohousing was initially transplanted to the US from Europe (starting with a community built near the state capitol in Sacramento in 1991), Californians commented that of course the model worked in Europe—its countries didn't have diversity issues like California. In cohousing, residents own private homes, and share common spaces which they manage and maintain together. Now, 18 years later, it's clear that the concept works in the US, with over 100 current cohousing communities—and that what binds them together are not homogeneous residents but a shared interest in creating community and the willingness to work through challenges.

Still, cohousing communities in the US are not particularly diverse. People sharing similar viewpoints do often seem to feel most comfortable with each other; and unlike their European counterparts, American communities usually develop without the help of nonprofits or welcoming municipalities, so they are limited to offering mostly market-rate housing.

For those reasons—and counter to American assessments of homogeneity—a much wider diversity of residents lives in cohousing in a country like the Netherlands than in the US.

Amsterdam, the capital of the Netherlands, holds a rich mix of cultures with more than a third of residents first or second generation immigrants. In their traditions, many generations typically live under one roof. But the same cannot be said for the Dutch, at least since the 1950s. Most modern Dutch housing units are apartments for the nuclear family, with little room for extended families.



Top image: Two apartments per floor were made available to Santosa group members, who also share a meeting room. The service provider, Laurens, is located on the ground floor of the seniors-only building. Above: The group members of Santosa on an excursion to view other cohousing projects during the development of their community.

Opposite page left: The common house at Anand Joti, located on the ground floor, left, is available to be rented out. Apartments are located above.

Middle: The future residents of Anand Joti participated in the development process. Right: Andre Bhola received training in checking blood pressure and blood sugar levels and he staffs the clinic at Anand Joti once a week.

As for Dutch service flats which provide assisted living for seniors, they have never been freely chosen by ethnic immigrants. Living in this kind of an institution forces them to adapt to Dutch culture and food to a much greater extent than they were used to previously. Quite the opposite has shown to be their inclination. As they age, these elders have less interest in integration and a preference for reminiscing back to their roots—talking about their youth and speaking their mother tongue. Their children, therefore, feel a sense of shame in having their aging parents cared for by others and in an institution.

The dilemma of living alone when needing more support and supervision, especially in an environment where the language, beliefs, and religion are not one's own, led to the idea of cohousing projects designed specifically for aging immigrants. Rental cohousing, developed by nonprofit organizations, presented a viable alternative to standard senior housing: elders can live together and support each other. In this way they often live for a longer period of time without professional care.

Surinamese Cohousing

Anand Joti means “peace and light” in Hindustani. As we sit in the little outdoor patio next to Andre and Betty Bhola's apartment door, overlooking the quiet, well-kept common garden, it seems to us a fitting description for this ethnic senior cohousing community. Andre Bhola is the project's spokesman.

He successfully bridges the three worlds of Surinam, the Netherlands, and Hindu culture, as does this development that he helped to instigate.

The residents of this 24-unit housing development originally came from Surinam in South America. This ethnically diverse former colony of Dutch Guinea became independent in 1975, and many Surinamese immigrated at that time to the Netherlands. In Amsterdam, Anand Joti (founded in the late 1980s) helps Hindustani Surinamese, who make up about 10 percent of the city's population. The foundation, mostly run by volunteers, has developed housing, day care, and other services, and has a special focus on health

As they age, these elders have less interest in integration, and a preference for reminiscing back to their roots and speaking their mother tongue.

education. For example, they've developed dramas and sketches in Hindustani around the subjects of obesity, heart disease, poverty, and other elder issues. The foundation helped to create Anand Joti cohousing, which opened in 1997.

Healthy Day-to-Day Life

At the once-a-week afternoon tea gathering for residents in the common space, Indian music plays as residents sip and talk. Traditionally, a pot of the dark Indian tea (chai), is spiced with cardamom, cinnamon, and cloves and mixed with milk and a number of heaping teaspoons of sugar. For the residents at Anand Joti, sugar is one of the ingredients best left out.

South Asians are estimated to have five

times the risk level as Europeans for diabetes. Aside from genetic predisposition, eating unhealthy foods, not exercising, and stress greatly increase the chances of becoming diabetic and having complications, such as cardiovascular illnesses.

About half the residents of Anand Joti have diabetes, and the weekly activities organized in the common house include exercise classes geared to interest the seniors. There's a yoga class three times a week, and a Bollywood dance class, taught by volunteers. Residents stroll to the common house for classes and a handful also buddy-up for more Nordic exercises, like walking.

A small health office—a mini-clinic—is in the common house. By its door, a prominent display offers literature on diabetes and other health issues. André

received training in checking blood pressure and blood sugar levels and he staffs the clinic once a week, explaining how to use the medicine provided by health practitioners.

The common house is used every day, contributing to a strong sense of community, as well as social and mental health. Twice a week residents meet for tea or coffee, Wednesday nights feature Hindi singing, Thursdays a reading group, and on Friday nights residents play cards and discuss Hindu history. A highlight, once a month, is watching Bollywood movies together.

Other common activities include resident participation in management, governance, and maintenance, including



The pedestrian-oriented neighborhood, with nearby school and family housing, creates an important counterpoint to the seniors-only cohousing Anand Joti.



At Anand Joti, Andre engaged the group in discussing difficult issues, such as social problems, disease and health, and conflict among residents.

taking care of the garden and cleaning the common house. The residents observe Hindu festivals, and celebrate the New Year and Christmas. They get together for an excursion twice a year, and have taken courses on managing together as a community. A Hindustani organization gives courses on aging, with an emphasis on managing income.

Residents also lend a helping hand to each other, for example shopping for each other. When someone falls ill, residents help them out by taking them to the doctor and cooking for them.

The community has encountered some economic difficulties in recent years. As the residents age, they need more help and services but their elderly pension is limited. Also, rents are rising, as is the extra fee for use of the common facilities that each household pays.

Development

For those coming from a foreign country who may not speak the language, navigating the process of development becomes extremely difficult. At Anand Joti, Andre acted as the liaison between the nascent group and the many organi-

zations whose cooperation and funding pushed the project forward. An intermediary who speaks the language and understands the culture has the trust of the forming group, and can help them articulate their needs and desires. Whether it's someone in the group working for a cultural organization, or someone knowledgeable about the development process working with a motivated potential resident, at least one person is needed who can communicate the requirements and constraints of the development process.

An ideal time to bring in the theme of health is when the group is forming. The culture of caring about health and the group's needs requires nurturing and development along with the physical form. At Anand Joti, Andre engaged the group in discussing difficult issues, such as social problems, disease and health, conflict among residents, and other issues that are not typically discussed. For senior collaborative living, it is very important that the group think about the care they want to give to each other, and so make their limits clear. Residents cannot take the place of nursing support but they can provide social support, subtle

monitoring (to the extent that they know who is up and about daily), and some short-term help when a resident is not seriously ill.

Santosa

Unlike Anand Joti, where residents moved into a tailor-made building, Santosa is an example of a "speckled" co-housing community, where Javanese (Indonesian) Surinamese households are "speckled" throughout a non-cohousing apartment building. Nico van den Dool, a cohousing consultant, contacted the nonprofit housing owner, Laurens, about the renovation of their large 235-unit senior complex, located in Rotterdam. With one wing of their phased upgrade completed, they discovered that about 10 percent of the displaced residents were not returning, freeing up apartments.

These service flats, located in a suburb, offered a number of advantages. Aside from a relatively quiet neighborhood, the seniors-only building amenities include a restaurant, a hairdresser, pedicure, laundry, billiards room, library, and several guestrooms. An organization providing professional home care services has an office in the building and can provide needed care.

Working with a local organization, the Spirit Foundation for Surinamese, Nico began forming a group in 1999. Members at first expressed reluctance to move out of their downtown neighborhood, but the expense and difficulty of finding appropriate housing persuaded them to look elsewhere. Thanks to the fact that they can live among other people of similar origin and ethnicity, these Surinam seniors were willing to take the bold step of moving to this apartment building in a "white" neighborhood. They saw the nearby shopping center and proximity to transit as strong advantages.

The group members all live in two-room apartments, grouped two to a floor, and they share a group common room for meetings. Typically, speckled cohousing groups have an "agreement of cooperation" set up with the owner. When a suitable apartment becomes available the owner informs the group. The group has

created a preferred profile describing their group and the type of people they feel would comfortably fit in. They contact people on their waiting list, and then prepare a proposal with their preferred person. When the group doesn't have a candidate, the owner rents the apartment in the typical way. For Santosa, which began with less than 10 households, the model has allowed the group to grow. The number of group members is contractually limited to 18 by the owner.

Social Interchange and Care in Santosa

Ethnic minority elders, in general, are comfortable with being socially connected to each other. They often meet and talk. When someone has the flu, a neighbor brings a bowl of soup. The people in the cohousing project look after each other, and call in a doctor for another member when necessary. They care about each other, but they can't do nursing tasks. Living in a senior cohousing group can in some way extend the time that a person lives independently, but if someone really needs nursing, professional home care is necessary. In this type of collaborative housing, seniors of the same ethnic minority live near each other, allowing the provision of culturally adapted professional care.

Usually, the members meet together twice a week in the community room. A volunteer from the group's cultural organization, who also assisted with the start of the project, joins them in the

community room to talk, to make coffee and tea, and to answer questions or give a helping hand when needed. Besides this set meeting, the group members see one another informally daily. They meet each other in their shared common room but also in their own apartments, or after dinner in the lobby. Some of the comments from residents:

"We know each other very well. Like family. If we cook a meal, we say 'come over and have dinner with me' just like a family."

"We see each other every day. And if we miss someone, we make a phone call."

"I can't see very well anymore, so it is difficult for me to go out to shop or the market. But I still can go to this communal room and meet other people."

The Santosa members are older than the typical residents of the building; the youngest member is in her 60s, the oldest over 85. The cultural organization acts as the intermediary between them and the Dutch health care system. When someone becomes ill, often other group members contact Spirit Foundation, and they in turn call the sick person, find out what's wrong, and contact appropriate care. A doctor, dentist, or other professional then pays a visit.

Several of the Santosa residents receive professional home care. When the caregivers see a problem, they also make contact with the cultural organization, which contacts not only the seniors, but also their adult children. The children will be informed, for example, that their mother,

having ignored her diet, is now not doing well. This is especially helpful when the children are not living nearby.

Minority Seniors Increasing

The number of seniors belonging to an ethnic minority in Holland will be increasing in the coming years and will rise almost 700 percent by 2050. In that year, one out of six non-western immigrants will be over 65 years old. So far, at least five ethnic groups have cohousing developments in Holland. Aside from Anand Joti, there are other senior cohousing developments for Hindustanis, and also for Chinese, Moroccans, Turks and other ethnic groups.

As far as the speckled variety, they "number at least 10" according to Peter Bakker of the FGW (Federation Gemeenschappelijk Wonen), the Dutch umbrella organization for cohousing.¹ A relatively new model, it also works for native Dutch elders, who grapple with similar needs of affordable, timely, and supportive housing.

The US will also see a rise in seniors who are immigrants, many of them minorities. As American seniors become more diverse, housing and care aimed at specific cultures will be in demand. The social and health benefits make this a useful model to explore. ❁

Dorit Fromm is an architect who writes, researches, and consults on innovative communities, design, and aging. Her articles have appeared in Urban Land, AARP Journal, ArcCa, and other publications, and she is the author of Collaborative Communities: Cohousing, Central Living and Other New Forms of Housing.

Els de Jong is a Dutch freelance social researcher specializing in housing studies. She is interested in innovative housing projects with the aim of improving apartment living. See www.wono.nl.

¹An ongoing discussion within FGW: should the speckled model be called cohousing? The question arises because of the ease of joining and leaving, and also because different community models that we would group under the term cohousing (*centraal wonen*)—for example, senior cohousing—also have different names in Dutch.



Future Anand Joti residents participated in the development process.



SENIOR COHOUSING

Establishing a Healthy, Sustainable Lifestyle for an Aging Generation

by Chuck Durrett

Last year Americans drove five billion miles caring for seniors in their homes (Meals on Wheels, Whistle Stop Nurses, and so on). In our small, semi-rural county in the Sierra foothills, Telecare made 60,000 trips in massive, lumbering, polluting vans-buses—usually carrying only one senior at a time—schlepping a couple thousand seniors total over hill and dale to doctor’s appointments, to pick up medicine, or to see friends. In our cohousing community of 21 seniors, I have never seen a single Telecare bus in the driveway. In cohousing it happens organically by caring neighbors: “Can I catch a ride with you?”; “Are you headed to the drug store?”, etc. And this alternative is much more fun and inexpensive for all involved, and much less damaging to the environment. Wolf Creek Lodge, a new senior cohousing community about to start construction, has 30 units to be built on one acre within walking distance of downtown Grass Valley, population 12,000. One future household will be moving from a 20 acre lot, nine miles from town; another from 15 acres, also nine miles out of town; another from 13 acres, seven miles from town; and others have similar stories. These are young seniors planning to make their lives not only more sustainable, but more fulfilling as well.

Bill Thomas, M.D., a prominent author on issues affecting seniors, describes our currently predominant scenario of caring for seniors as the “\$3 trillion dilemma.” The cost of care for the 78 million new senior/baby boomers “coming of age” in the next 20 years will be \$3 trillion more per year than it is now (and that is in a nation with a \$13 trillion GDP—to put it into

perspective). It goes without saying that the current pattern is not sustainable from an environmental, cultural, or financial point of view.

President Obama has stated that for us to arrest global warming, we will have to reduce carbon emissions by 2 percent per year until 2050. It seems doable, but last year, carbon emissions increased by 1.4 percent—we are headed in the wrong direction. Given this situation, we’ve got to do something. We need to think collectively about how to set seniors up for success and to help them achieve their full potential into their last 20-30 years, and how to set the environment up for success at the same time. Cohousing is for seniors who want to be a part of the solution.

We can help seniors fulfill their desires for a more rewarding living arrangement that better supports their well-being, physically, socially, and emotionally. And the good news is that I haven’t witnessed anyone having more fun since the college dorms than seniors living in cohousing—nor seen anyone living more sustainably (my electric bill last year was minus \$83.84). Senior cohousing allows seniors to live lightly on the planet and to enhance their quality of life at the same time. ❁



Chuck Durrett is author of Senior Cohousing: A Community Approach to Independent Living, second edition, published by New Society Publishers. See his speaking schedule at www.cohousingco.com/senior-cohousing.cfm.



HIGH WIND: A Retrospective

Belden Paulson, University of Wisconsin professor for 35 years, cofounded (with his wife Lisa) the High Wind Association in 1977 and the High Wind community in Plymouth, Wisconsin in 1981. The following interview-style article was inspired by a conversation that Belden and late community networker Geoph Kozeny had intended to have before Geoph's passing, but never did.

...

How did you get involved with intentional communities?

In October 1976 Lisa went to a conference at Findhorn, the spiritual community in Scotland, for three weeks. She had heard about the 40-pound cabbages and roses blooming in the snow, all near the Arctic Circle, but she was dubious about some of the tales. She'd already had a traumatic encounter in northeast Brazil with Macumba (a voodoo-type experience that almost paralyzed her). Recently she had helped found Psy-Bionics, an organization in Wisconsin teaching altered states of consciousness.

In those days, the latter 1970s, the New Age had not yet become an over-used cliché. Her scraps of notes included this: "the New Age means recognizing that mutual cooperation and respect and love are essential if our planet is to survive. All living things but humans operate naturally within this system; our intellect and greed and selfishness and lust for power have gotten in the way of a larger awareness." She quoted David Span-

gler, one of the conference speakers, who wrote in his *Revelation—The Birth of A New Age*: "the New Age is fundamentally a change of consciousness from one of isolation and separation to one of communion, attunement, wholeness."

How did you take to all of this New Age stuff?

I was very perplexed. We'd been married for more than 20 years but I'd never seen her so fired up. I wasn't even sure of the best questions to ask to draw out the Findhorn experience. Lisa obviously felt she would soon be dragged back from the heights of the New Age into the mainstream culture.

I myself was at a point of some openness to alternative thinking. I had joined the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and University Extension in the early 1960s, teaching political science, and was heavily involved dealing with inner city poverty and racism. Lisa and I had met in the waterfront slums of Naples, Italy, soon after college and worked for years overseas. After our immersion on the front lines of great world needs, both of us were concerned with a culture in trouble.

Several months after Lisa's return from Scotland, she talked me into driving to Chicago to attend a lecture by Peter Caddy—who, along with Eileen Caddy and Dorothy Maclean, had cofounded Findhorn. I was impressed by Peter's down-to-earth talk on the community's successes and challenges and his idealism about serving the planet with a new consciousness.



Photos courtesy of Belden Paulson

Bel (in center) helping to build the bioshelter at High Wind.

How could you relate any of this to your position at the university?

A professor in the university's school of engineering had just received a grant to explore advanced thinking on the interrelationship between technology and culture. I introduced him to the "Findhorn story," with its emphasis on lifestyle changes, and to E.F. Schumacher, one of the Findhorn conference speakers, whose book *Small is Beautiful* advocated simple living. He was intrigued and asked me to represent the university on a planning committee for a major Chicago conference in spring 1977, keynoted by Schumacher.

With Schumacher the magnet for the 2300 attendees, along with 60 other lectures and workshops, we reserved a room for 15 people where Lisa could talk about Findhorn. To our astonishment, 400 folks lined the corridor, demanding a larger space. Next to Schumacher, "Lisa's Findhorn" was the big event of the conference. I had invited one of my deans, who was so enthusiastic about her workshop that he urged me to organize New Age education through the university.

In June 1977, since people were thirsty for information, we got the university to sponsor talks by Peter and Eileen Caddy. In the largest available space on campus, they wowed the 1200 attending, drawing in people we never imagined were interested.

In short order, I got approvals from university officials to begin lining up a series of seminars. Over the next two years, we offered several cutting-edge programs, including "Planetary Survival and the Role of Alternative Communities," and "New Dimensions in Governance—Images of Holistic Community" (with David Spangler and Milenko Matanovic, coorganizers of the Lorian Association)—drawing people from business, government, and academia, as well as traditional students and people who had attended our previous talks and were questioning conventional trends and belief systems.

During all this activity, what was happening with you—with your initial skepticism about intentional communities like Findhorn and the New Age?

By the end of 1978 I was realizing I was no longer the same

person I'd been. In spring 1978 when Lisa returned to Findhorn, I went along and participated in a week-long intensive experience of the community. My contact with the leaders and residents convinced me of the significance of this kind of model for rethinking the future of our culture. My intimate collaboration with David and Milenko, along with many others we had brought in for classes and consultations, had deepened my perceptions of reality far beyond anything I had learned at Oberlin College and the University of Chicago.

As increasing numbers were drawn to our seminars and presentations, we began hearing the comment: "We're seminared out. Let's do something practical." That's when we established the High Wind Association, to develop a sharing community, relying largely on renewable energy, utilizing the land as an ecosystem, and serving a demonstration and educational role. Lisa and I made available our run-down 46-acre farm 50 miles north of Milwaukee.

With two colleagues we accepted the invitation of John Todd and his associates to visit the New Alchemy Institute on Cape Cod and Nova Scotia, to see their experimental bioshelters. They were pioneers in solar energy, energy-efficient construction, and sustainable agriculture. They convinced us to try something comparable in Wisconsin. They helped us design and submit a bioshelter project to the US Energy Department in its small grants program for appropriate technology, to be built at the farm.



Tim Connor

When we convened a meeting on a blustery evening in February 1981, to announce the new grant and recruit volunteers, we thought 15 would be a good turnout. Two hundred showed up, and immediately we had an experienced carpenter who agreed to be lead builder for bioshelter construction, and a teacher/gardener who would grow food to support the workers. Soon, a PhD psychologist signed on; she would run the household, including the kitchen operation. We already had an idealistic technical genius on-site who worked at the *Milwaukee Journal* as editorial librarian. Suddenly the farm was humming with activity, the farmhouse had become a “pressure cooker” with 10 residents and two dogs, and a construction gang was on the ground. Soon we had evolved into an intentional community.

I was undergoing my own personal revolution; maybe a better word was transformation. I fully endorsed the *vision*. The test now was whether we could find the will and resources to move beyond the talk and rhetoric and actually *do it*.

What was your first big conflict, when the community could

The founders had articulated the vision and purposes, but community members rightly wanted to make the experience their own.



have blown apart?

We all knew the bioshelter was a complex building, with no examples except New Alchemy’s “Ark” out East. The construction engineer who’d been advising our lead builder wanted to use wood construction in the greenhouse, while our well-known solar architect, who had volunteered her services, favored spancrete flooring. I won’t get into details other than to say her model was strongly preferred by several at High Wind, who happened to be women.

Since our builder and his mostly male crew had already gone ahead, they would have to tear down what had been done. Winter was coming on and the building had to be closed in. Our builder was feeling the criticism and tremendous frustration; it would be a disaster if he quit. Likewise, it would be most undesirable if our architect pulled out with her professional oversight. The building inspector had approved her design. Underlying it all, there was resentment against the macho energy—“the men know best.” We had always used consensus for major decisions at High Wind.

We told our builder to hold up the work. This was our first internal crisis, which threatened to break apart our fledgling community. We held numerous meetings, and contacted outside experts who had differing opinions but usually sided with the architect. I felt some personal responsibility because I had recruited both the engineer and architect; I personally was open to either solution. We finally agreed to continue along the lines our builder and his allies laid out. Our architect resigned and no other architect would touch the situation. While Lisa was one of the builder’s biggest critics on this, she wrote him a heartfelt letter of appreciation of him as a person. One of the guys wrote the community: “We at High Wind represent an ideal that we must uphold. This means not getting trapped in tactical-level controversies that afterward will seem like tempests in a teapot.”

As High Wind evolved, what were the biggest personal challenges you felt?

As a host of sticky community issues surfaced, especially in the earlier years, they often ended up with Lisa and me. After all, we started the whole enterprise, we had owned the property even though most of it was now in High Wind hands and some we donated, and when serious financial bottlenecks occurred, we usually stepped in. Often it came down to an issue of perception: who held the power?

“**Founders’ Syndrome.**” This was the title of a panel for founders of six communities from around the world, held at Findhorn. The panel articulated a universal issue all the founders faced: the tension between the originators who articulated the vision and purposes, and community members who rightly wanted to make the experience their own. This might mean seeking to reframe community goals and challenge the initial leadership. High Wind, like all the panel’s communities,



Dave Somsky

Sunrise Indian balance dance at High Wind.



As the years passed, I realized that I was not very good at intentional community group dynamics. While visionary thinking was what we were all about, it could be scary, even oppressive.

emphasized its commitment to non-hierarchical leadership and governance by consensus. I cannot recall a single High Wind community decision reached by consensus that Lisa and I overturned, even if we had had the power to do so. But there were many intense debates during interminable meetings to reach consensus. On several occasions when we felt the community might be falling apart, with factions developing, and we were unsure of our proper role, we sought counsel from experienced Findhorn or Lorian friends. Their response was always the same: founders hold responsibility to sound a clear note about the vision. If there are members with other visions, they should be respected but asked to leave and create their own community. Though we respected these advisors, we found their counsel impractical, as visions do evolve, co-authored by others in the community. In fact, Peter Caddy was asked to give up his role due to his authoritarian leadership. The Lorians, although often indicating interest, never founded a residential community.

Another personal issue?

Processors and Doers. As residents at the farm evolved from the original construction gang to an intentional community, some people were very production/goal-oriented. Others were more concerned with the process of getting there. While both obviously were essential, at times one or the other approach took over and, in my view, became extreme. Sometimes Lisa leaned toward process: slow down, take care of the ever-present human dimensions. Often I was so concerned about all the challenges before us, holding a lot of responsibility for “results,” I could go too far toward “getting it done.” I could become impatient when evening sessions were convened where everyone was required to “share your pain,” even if at the time there were those who didn’t feel any pain or didn’t want to share it. I was labeled as someone with “thick skin,” insensitive to those with “thin skins” who were easily hurt by life’s experiences. (My “thick skin” was also nurtured by having worked for years in areas of dire need with poverty and refugees, and also

as a teenager caring for an invalid mother who could die at any moment.)

I welcomed our periodic “internal conferences,” sometimes with an outside resource person, when each of us could express our needs and wishes. Lisa and I, as much or more than other community members, got a healthy share of criticism: she for her lofty visions—editorials in *Windwatch*, the community newsletter, to lift the residents out of their daily nitty-gritty grind. I received even more censure, in part because I was often introducing ideas and plans for educational programs that scared the community, and which they thought too hard to carry out. Also, when someone else came up with a project and I said, “Great idea, you do it,” it was interpreted as code for “I don’t think it will work and I don’t want to get involved.”

The most significant issue I had to confront was the realization that as the years passed, I was not very good at intentional community group dynamics. At High Wind I learned that while visionary thinking was what we were all about, it could be scary, even oppressive. All agreed that while the community’s mission was imperative, the process was at least as important as the results. The qualities that were optimally required for my approach did not fit too well into the conventional group dynamics of an intentional community.

What about the high points of your High Wind experience?

Notwithstanding the challenges, our community was an exciting place. Dedicated folks were converging at the farm to give their all, the bioshelter was moving toward realization, the media had made High Wind its darling. Residents were very aware of the dysfunctionalities of modern life and were seeking a new way to see the world. For me this endeavor merited every ounce of my energy (although I couldn’t give it my all because I also had a full-time university job). This was one place to *take a stand*. What we were attempting to create had more potential than anything else I was aware of.

I learned that when the community really “worked,” there



High Wind staff meeting in experimental Styrofoam block dome.



Resident staff at High Wind community in mid-1980s.

was a special “glue” that held together the vision and the practical daily operations. (Sometimes the vision became too starry-eyed or in the daily nitty-gritty we forgot its purpose). It seemed only certain people had that unique gift of integrating the larger High Wind vision with implementing the essential daily tasks. They embodied a unique spiritual capacity that cemented our community life into a functioning whole. It was only later, when some of us looked back on High Wind’s peak periods, that we could identify those particular individuals.

As a learning center, we had many successes. We brought in “new thinking” from around the country and world. Every summer for a dozen years High Wind and the university co-sponsored seminars with the Lorians that combined “the spiritual” with “the practical.” We organized several trips to Findhorn. Our university-sponsored semester-long three-community seminar—one month at high Wind, one month at Findhorn, one month at another community—usually produced a life-changing experience for participants. We offered this five times.

The University and High Wind put on three national conferences—on neighborhoods and appropriate technology, transformation and economic growth, and the future of work—drawing in resources from around the world. We organized a group with the Sirius and Findhorn communities and ICIS (International Center for Integrative Studies) that conceptualized what an alternative think tank would look like. This led to a national consultation held at the U.N. Annex in New York, with 60 leaders from alternative groups. Through the university over a decade we offered a series of classes on Sustainable Futures (for graduate credit). The highlight was always the tour at High Wind involving its history, solar homes, and organic farm. One weekend we convened a group to explore what a university of the future would be like, and then used this material for several courses. The popular annual tour of our solar homes stimulated many folks to build or rehab their own dwellings. One of our most rigorous efforts was a two-year contract with the Milwaukee Public Schools to bring 700 inner city middle school kids to High Wind.

What happened to High Wind?

In 1991 the High Wind board decided to end High Wind

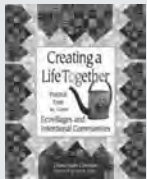
as an intentional community. We now considered ourselves an “eco-neighborhood.” This was a searing decision, but the old idealism had lost its intensity. Four different waves of residents had shared their lives in the community for shorter or longer periods. After a dozen years most of us felt burnt out. We felt we could no longer serve the lofty mission in the same way as at the time of our creation. High Wind continued for another decade as a learning center, with a full educational program and receiving some substantial funding. Then in 2001 the board decided to sell its “public campus”: the bioshelter, farmhouse complex and other buildings, and some adjoining lands. Those of us who continue to live at High Wind still have substantial lands, share the same values as initially, run tours, meet with visitors, and consult, but the tempo is free and easy compared to the past. The organic farm, now owned and managed by two former residents, is a major CSA in the region, feeding over 500 families.

The High Wind Board now operates as a foundation, using funds from the sale of the property, added to by sensitive investing. It provides small grants to sustainability-related organizations in the region. The new owners of the public buildings are two Buddhist groups that for years had been sponsoring retreats at High Wind.

Ultimately, no matter what form it takes, High Wind’s work goes on. A certain creative spiritual power always had its role to play in both the residential and non-residential communities, because it didn’t deal with place but with vision and spirit. For me, consciousness means spirit; it has something to do with such values as compassion, empowerment, justice. In this circle of consciousness, life actually is hard, because it involves commitment to a paradigm that challenges most of the values of our dominant culture. The vision itself is extraordinary while we ourselves are ordinary. This unrealized gap easily leads to frustration, because hard as we try, our expectations are seldom fulfilled. Yet I believe that the intentional communities movement—I refer to all the actual residents of communities and to all those who are not residents but have embraced the idea—is truly on the cutting edge of the emerging culture. ❁

Belden Paulson’s memoir, Odyssey of a Practical Visionary, was published in summer 2009 by Thistlefield Books.

Health and Well-Being on Community Bookshelf



Creating a Life Together
Practical Tools to Grow Eco-
villages and Intentional Com-
munities

Diana Leafe Christian

2003; 272 pages; paperback
Creating a Life Together is a unique

guide to launching and sustaining successful communities providing step-by-step, practical advice on everything from the role of founders to vision documents, decision-making, agreements, legal options, buying and financing land, sustainable site design, and communication, group process, and dealing well with conflict, as well as community profiles, cautionary tales, and ample resources for learning more. There is no better book on how to start an intentional community.



The New Farm Vegetarian Cookbook

edited by *Louise Hagler and Dorothy R. Bates*

224 pages; paperback

This great collection of recipes was developed by talented cooks from The Farm, an intentional, vegetarian community in Tennessee.

The recipes are completely vegan, and completely delicious. Learn how to cook tasty, nutritious, and inexpensive meals using no eggs or dairy products and containing no cholesterol, and pick up tips on vegan cooking, including bread basics and working with tofu, tempeh, and gluten. A well-used copy of this classic can be found in the kitchen of (almost) every community in the United States.



The Findhorn Book of Community Living

by *William Metcalf*

2004; 128 pages; Findhorn Press

From one of the most successful and well-known intentional communities, Findhorn, comes a well-written introduction to community living that will interest everyone searching

for a satisfying alternative to mainstream society. It provides reliable guidance, information, and resources for the community-seeker. Much in this book will be of use to those who are already living in community or who have some knowledge of this lifestyle.



From Asparagus to Zucchini
A Guide To Cooking Farm-Fresh
Seasonal Produce

by *the Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition*

Third Edition; 2004; 218 pages; 8 1/2" by 11"

This cookbook "sparkles with community" and is a marvelous resource for those wanting to make the most of their local and seasonal produce. The Third Edition is better than ever with 100 percent original recipes, 80 percent of them new! The main part of the book features 53 different vegetable and herb sections with over 420 recipes.



Gaviotas

A Village to Reinvent the World—10th Anniversary Edition
by *Alan Weisman*

2008; 256 pages; paperback

Gaviotas the village is surprising, uplifting, extraordinary. *Gaviotas* the nonfiction book is as compelling

as a novel, as educational as a textbook, as inspirational as the biography of a great person. This new edition continues the story of this remarkable community through the past 10 years.



Getting a Grip

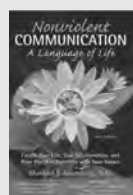
Clarity, Creativity and Courage in a World Gone Mad.

by *Frances Moore Lappe*

2007; 208 pages; paperback

Getting a Grip is a beacon of hope that serves to remind us that we can all make choices everyday that positively impact

the communities we live in, both local and global.



Nonviolent Communication

A Language of Compassion

by *Marshall B. Rosenberg, Ph.D.*

2000; 211 pages; paperback

Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is founded on language and communication skills that strengthen our ability to remain human, even under trying conditions. It contains nothing

new; all that has been integrated into NVC has been known for centuries. The intent is to remind us about what we already know—about how we humans were meant to relate to one another—and to assist us in living in a way that concretely manifests this knowledge.



The Post-Petroleum Survival Guide and Cookbook

Recipes for Changing Times

by *Albert Bates*

2006; 286 pages; paperback

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.



Rise Up Singing

The Group Singing Songbook

15th Anniversary Edition

edited by *Peter Blood & Annie Patterson*

2004; 288 pages; spiralbound
paperback

1200 songs. What is a community

without song? This amazing spiral-bound collection is perfect for sing-alongs, and has just about every song you've ever sung and then some!



Turning To One Another

Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future

by *Margaret J. Wheatley*

2002; 158 pages

Margaret Wheatley believes that we can change the world if we start listen-

ing to one another again. Simple, honest, human conversation. Not mediation, negotiation, problem-solving, debate, or public meetings but simple, truthful conversations. The intent of this book is to encourage and support you in beginning conversations about things that are important to you and those near you. It has no other purpose. Beautifully designed and executed, *Turning to One Another* includes multicultural experiences, poems, and quotes as it leads us through its thought-provoking sections. It is a wonderful tool to inspire and bring groups together in the best possible way—by talking and listening.



Voices from The Farm

Adventures in Community Living

edited by *Rupert Fike*

1998; 162 pages; paperback

This book is filled with stories about the history and values and reality of living at The Farm during the almost 30 years this intentional community in Tennessee has been in existence.

Anyone who's interested in living in community, knowing more about the early days of intentional communities, or finding out more about the changes that can happen in community should read this.



The World Cafe

Shaping Our Future Through

Conversations That Matter

by *Juanita Brown with David Isaacs and The World Cafe Community*

2005; 242 pages; paperback

Clear, empowering, precise and potent, *The World Cafe* is indispensable for anyone who wants to engage with others on a level that will make a real difference.

store.ic.org



REACH

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

You may use the form on the last page of Reach to place an ad. THE REACH DEADLINE FOR ISSUE #146/SPRING 2010 (out in early March) is Friday, January 22, 2010.

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 Magazine, 10385 Magnolia Road, Sullivan, MO 63080; message line: 573-468-8822; email: ads@ic.org. (If you email an ad, please include your mailing address, phone number and be sure to send off the check at the same time.) Discriminatory preferences based on federally protected categories in housing ads are prohibited. For a complete statement of our Advertising Policy, please refer to page 6.

Intentional communities listing in the Reach section are invited to also visit our online Communities Directory at <http://directoryic.org>. Listing on our web site is free and data from the site is used to produce our print version of the Communities Directory. Contact: directory@ic.org for more information on being listed in the upcoming Communities Directory.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ENTROPY PAWSED. Entropy Pawsed is a nature-linked low energy living demonstration site in rural West Virginia. Visit: www.entropyawsed.org.

COMMUNITIES WITH OPENINGS

COMMON GROUND, Virginia. Intentional Community of 30 years, with cooperative focus on large organic gardens, has openings. Located in picturesque area near college town of Lexington. Live close to nature in the wooded mountains of Jefferson National Forest. Seeking young families of a homesteading mindset/ spirit to add to our small but growing group. Kids welcome. 80 acre land trust, community freshwater spring, trout pond, warm swimming pond, pavilion, schoolhouse/ visitor's center. Sustainability key, not the maddening grind. Transitional housing available with partial work-exchange possible. Interested visitor's contact Glen Leasure 540-463-4493 or through web contact at our page on IC.org.

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 ECOVILLAGE, Black Mountain, North Carolina. Earthaven is an aspiring ecovillage founded in 1994 on 320-forested acres in Western North Carolina, 50 minutes from Asheville. Our 53 members are spiritually diverse, and value sustainable ecological systems, permaculture design, and healthy social relations. We make decisions by consensus and have independent incomes. We lease homesites from the community and pay annual dues. We have a few small businesses and members who offer internships and workshops in permaculture design, natural building, consensus, creating ecovillages, herbal medicine, and healing. We are seeking hardworking people with organic-growing, construction, or fundraising skills; healers, and families with children. www.earthaven.org, 828-669-3937, or information@earthaven.org.

ECO-FARM, near Plant City, Florida. We are an agricultural-based intentional community focused on sustainable living, farming, alternative energies (with an emphasis on solar), music, environmental issues and social justice. Community products: organic vegetables and eggs, ornamental trees, cane syrup, Tilapia and native plants. We also have mechanic and wood-working shops. Community outreach activities include a sustainable living program (www.wmnf.org), farmers' markets and support of global community efforts. Carpentry, mechanical or agricultural experience a plus. Check out our web site at www.ecofarmfl.org; 813-754-7374; or email ecofarmfl@yahoo.com.

ELDER FAMILY FELLOWSHIP, near Cherokee, North Carolina, Smoky Mountain National Park and easy drive to Asheville and nearby medical facilities. Your best investment—shared ownership in a loving “family-of-choice” sanctuary. For active elders with lots of free time to enjoy group activities such as gardening, hiking, shared meals, spiritual gatherings, fire circles and lots more. Non-smokers, healthy, financially secure. Large shared home and separate home for guests or future caregivers on eight acres in private cove with private bedroom/office/bathrooms and large common kitchen. We are part of a larger extended family community with community building, swimming pool, organic garden, trails and 46-acre spiritual retreat land. See unionacres.org for information on the area and Community and click on Elder Family Fellowship for our web page. 828 508-6243 or e-mail annariel@dnet.net.

FELLOWSHIP COMMUNITY, Spring Valley, New York. We seek co-workers. Located 30 minutes north of NYC, we are an intergenerational community founded in 1966, centered around the care of the elderly. Now numbering about 150 elderly, co-workers and children, we grow our own fruit and vegetables bio-dynamically. All ages work together in our practical work activities. They include a candle shop, metal shop, wood shop, weavery/handwork group, greenhouse, publishing press, bakery, outlet store and medical practice. The spiritual science (anthroposophy) of Rudolf Steiner is the basis for our work. There is a Waldorf School and several other anthroposophical initiatives nearby. Our lifestyle is an intense social/cultural commitment to the future of

RELATED BACK ISSUES

Health and Well-Being



The following COMMUNITIES back issues speak to various aspects of our current “Health and Well-Being” theme, as do some 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 70.

- | | | |
|------|--------------|--|
| #135 | Summer 2007 | WHAT DO YOU EAT?
WHERE DOES IT COME FROM? |
| #132 | Fall 2006 | WILL YOU LIVE YOUR ELDER YEARS
IN COMMUNITY? |
| #128 | Fall 2005 | RESOLVING CONFLICT IN COMMUNITY |
| #123 | Summer 2004 | A DAY IN THE LIFE |
| #121 | Winter 2003 | THRIVING IN COMMUNITY |
| #104 | Fall 1999 | CONFLICT & CONNECTION: ASSESSING
COMMUNITY WELL-BEING |
| #102 | Spring 1999 | HEALTH & HEALING:
COMMUNITY IS HEALING |
| #89 | Winter 1995 | GROWING OLDER IN COMMUNITY |
| #87 | Summer 1995 | LOVE, ROMANCE & SEX |
| #50 | October 1981 | DYING |
| #43 | April 1980 | HEALTH AND WELL-BEING |
| #14 | May 1975 | THERAPY |

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 internship 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.heartwood-cohousing.com; mail1@heartwoodcohousing.com; 970-884-4055.

HYGIEIA HOMESTEAD, Sterling, Michigan. Two adults on fifty-five (55) acres of organic farmland seeking other raw vegans to become self-sufficient using sustainable building and farming practices. We plan to establish a community business growing healthy food and teach the live vegan lifestyle. Janet and Mark @ 989-654-4031 or rawnursejanet@yahoo.com.

LIBERTY VILLAGE COHOUSING, Frederick, Maryland. A beautiful rural cohousing community of 18 homes, ready to build 10 more this year. Homes are located on eight acres with pedestrian-only walkways, leaving 15 acres of meadow, woods, and wetlands to explore. We are the county’s first community where all residents have been educated on practices to save the Chesapeake Bay. Homes are energy efficient with geothermal heating and low energy bills. We are multi-generational from age one to 80. Commu-

nity decisions are made by consensus, usually smoothly and amiably and with spirited discussion if needed. We put a high priority on listening to each other's point of view and working things out. Located 10 miles from Frederick and convenient to the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area. Check out our website www.libertyvillage.com.

MULVEY CREEK LAND COOP, British Columbia, Canada. Mulvey Creek Land Coop holds 240 acres in the spectacular wilderness of British Columbia. We have 4-acre lots for sale for under \$50,000. Located 70 minutes from Nelson, we are off-grid & 4-wheel-drive accessible during the winter months. We need people with a passion for learning to live cooperatively and compassionately. Members are keen to share a wide range of interests, including gardening, farming, back country recreation, sustainable technology, homeschooling, Nonviolent Communication, Dynamic Governance, Yoga, & Vipassana Meditation. Contact: sandybreathing@gmail.com, 250-355-2393 ext. 1433.

OLYMPIA ECOVILLAGE, Olympia, Washington. A-Welcome-To-All: We Invite You, Olympia Ecovillage has openings and is growing. We are located in Olympia, Washington close to downtown on three bus lines and we are looking for new members. We can award college credit to Evergreen State College Interns. Full details here: www.WeInviteYou.org – We love you all!

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 35 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.

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Dancing Rabbit is a growing ecovillage whose members are dedicated to sustainability and social change. We're especially seeking natural builders and people with leadership skills.

Go to join.dancingrabbit.org to arrange a visit.

1 Dancing Rabbit Lane • Rutledge, MO 63563 • 660-883-5511

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 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.

ZEPHYR VALLEY COMMUNITY COOPERATIVE, Rushford, Minnesota. Zephyr Valley Community Cooperative (www.zephyrcoop.org) is a rural cohousing community with 11 members and 10 kids on 500 acres of stunningly beautiful land in the hills of southeast Minnesota. We have four ponds, a creek; wetlands; pastures; bluff & forest lands and 80 acres of land in crops farmed organically. We strive to live lightly on the land. There are seven individual homes; and sites for six more, a common house; two barns and several outbuildings. We have a community center and a spring fed swimming pond, a rec field, trails and barns for animals and storage. Decisions about the land and community are made by consensus, all others are individual. If you're interested in small-scale, organic farming or just in living in a rural cohousing community, contact us at zephyrcoop@yahoo.com.

COMMUNITIES FORMING

SEEKING PIONEERS. Ecovillage forming, 35-acre wooded sanctuary one hour from KC. Have old farmhouse and 100-year-old refurbished barn that serves as lodging and meeting space. Retreat and workshop center under Unity Churches for 14 years. Welcome diversity. Seeking homesteaders and investors, those with energy and skills to create, learn, and ultimately model sustainability in a living community. Visit www.lightcenter.info, email info@lightcenter.info.

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@terrasante.org.

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HOUSES AND LAND FOR SALE OR RENT

COHO CANYON, West Marin, California. Coho Canyon is offering two shares with dwellings starting as low as \$100K each. Visit <http://www.marincohousing.org> or call Alex 415-608-2594.

HOUSE FOR SALE, midcoast Maine. House for sale within Ravenwood Collective, a small ecovillage in beautiful midcoast Maine. 176 mostly-wooded-acres owned jointly. Privately owned homes (homeowners association) each with two acres. All members serve on the Board of Ravenwood. This home is the original Maine farmhouse that has been renovated but is ready for the next level of retrofitting. Ravenwood is a sustainable living teaching site for college students. Excellent landmates, bird and wildlife sanctuary beyond the agriculture land, a small stream, small orchard, berries, chickens, and other great features. \$155,000. Email occonnell@lesley.edu if you would like pictures, documents or to learn more.

NEW BUFFALO CENTER, north of Taos, New Mexico. FARM and LEARNING CENTER north of Taos, New Mexico. Turnkey. On seven acres this 5,000 sq. ft. adobe opens its arms to gather sunlight into six bedrooms,

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INTERNS, RESIDENCIES

SANDHILL FARM, Rutledge, Missouri. Internships in Sustainable Community Living. If you love gardening and would like to gain experience in organic farming, food processing, temp 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

NEW JERSEY WOMAN, 55 years old, in-

terested in connecting with folks who are interested in learning more about Intentional Communities. Also seeking one or two roommates who have common values, (I am an active Unitarian Universalist), to share the expenses of a private home in Toms River, NJ. Animal friendly, near parkway and bus station. 732-330-4054 or louiseille@yahoo.com

PUBLICATIONS, BOOKS, WEB SITES

COHOUSING.org, the Cohousing Website, is filled with core resources for cohousing community – a thriving segment of the intentional communities movement. The site includes the Cohousing Directory, info on National Cohousing Conferences, Classified Ads, and FREE publications including Cohousing Articles, online Cohousing Books, In-the-News, Just-for-Fun, and much more. Its presented by Coho/US, the Cohousing Association of the United States - please visit us at cohousing.org.

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RESOURCES

FEDERATION OF EGALITARIAN COMMUNITIES (FEC). LIVE YOUR VALUES, LEARN NEW SKILLS. For 25 years, the FEC has welcomed new members to our groups based on cooperation, ecology, fairness, and nonviolence. No joining fees required, just a willingness to join in the work. We share income from a variety of cottage industries. For more information: www.thefec.org; fec@ic.org; 417-679-4682; or send \$3 to FEC, HC-3, Box 3370-CM00, Tecumseh, MO 65760.

GROUP PROCESS RESOURCES available at Tree Bressen's website. Topics include consensus, facilitation, blocks and dissent, community-building exercises, alternative formats to general discussion, the list goes on. Dozens of helpful articles, handouts, and more--all free. www.treegroup.info

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

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Extent & Nature of Circulation	Avg. No. Copies Each Issue During Previous 12 Mos.	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
A. Total No. Copies (Net press run)	3,690	3,550
B. Paid and/or Requested Circ.		
1. Outside County Mail Subs.	1,331	1,255
2. Paid In County Subs.	2	2
3. Sales Through Dealers and other non-USPS paid distribution	1,977	1,913
4. Other classes through USPS	0	0
C. Total Paid Distribution	3,310	3,170
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1. Outside County	0	0
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E. Total Free/Nominal Rate Distribution	0	0
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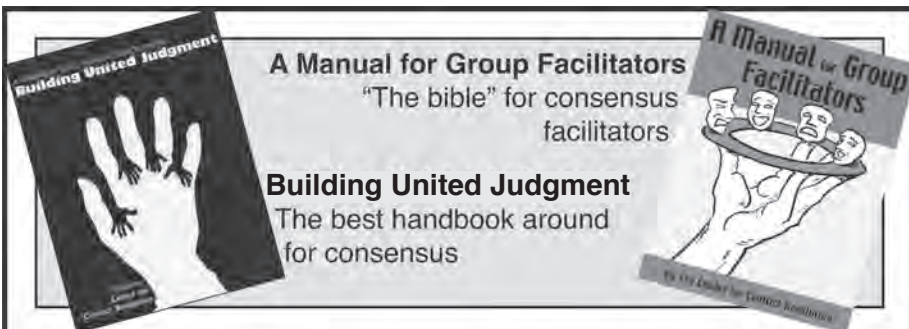
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#145

GROWING A CULTURE OF COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELL-BEING AT EARTHAVEN ECOVILLAGE

(continued from p. 17)

Inner Health at Earthaven

Another serious health factor is emotional balance. Although our community has its share of conflict and dysfunctional connections, we've managed to create an atmosphere that favors openness and growth, and have prioritized the gathering of tools and teachings likely to be trust-building and uplifting. Over the last few years, the teachings of Marshall Rosenberg as contained in the Non-violent Communication protocols, and the dynamic tool known as the ZEGG Forum, have both added life and luster to our group process. There's nothing like an honest and transparent sharing and clearing performed in a truthful yet blame-free context, steeped in compassion, for lifting community morale!

It is still true, given the demands of our pioneering strategic plan, that someone going through an extended emotional crisis isn't likely to do well at Earthaven, although we are making strides integrating emotional and interpersonal support into the community medicine cabinet. At least until we have sufficiently provided for more basic housing, agriculture, and economic support, folks whose issues demand long-term attention will need to be discouraged from joining.

In the area of spirituality, we've evolved to a diverse state of ideas and choices that can be a challenge to the maintenance of solid common ground. For now, care of the body and the planet—the "temple" and the "garden"—is our unifying spiritual discipline, a way we share a deep consensus about the sacred. In our spiritual diversity, we find a beautiful unity at the core of our realities.

We can still feel challenged by a lack of closeness, because spiritual practice,

diets, and health care regimens are such core daily experiences. Our likeliest solution may be the evolution of a common mindfulness, a regular practice of being present to each other, ourselves, and the life around us with our attention and energy, instead of being caught up in the vagaries of the thought-filled mind. Perhaps such a "wisdom sangha" can receive from its members the insights and guidance of their individual awakenings and unfold and flourish in the years ahead. Meanwhile, both our diversity and our underlying unity of purpose seem to be strengths, helping support individual and community health in ways no outside health plan ever could. ❁



Arjuna da Silva is a cofounder of Earthaven, currently the Airspinner (sort of like a Board Secretary) of its homeowners association, and president of

its nonprofit educational project, Culture's Edge. She's been a sociologist most of her life, addressing issues of social justice and cultural change both academically and as an activist. She practices hypnotherapy and counseling within the community, facilitates meditation and qigong practices, teaches consensus decision-making and various group process techniques, and looks forward to the creation of a comprehensive self health care center at Earthaven within the next decade. Arjuna is also dedicated to the natural building movement, and is about to become the first resident of an earth-and-straw building called Leela, updates of which can be viewed from time to time at her website, thenaturalbuildingschool.com.



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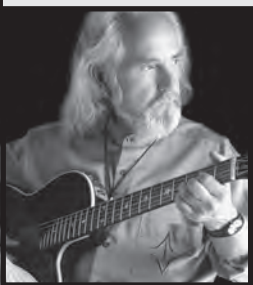
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CELL PHONES, EDUCATION, FARMING, AND MENTAL HEALTH

(continued from p. 25)

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ing to psychotherapist Linda Buzzell, co-editor of the new Sierra Club Books' *Ecotherapy: Healing with Nature in Mind*. "We struggle with diminishing success to adapt to the strange mechanical and disembodied world we have created," including "endless 24/7 online communications...constantly rushing to keep up as we inevitably fall further behind." In that machine-driven process "we find ourselves destroying not only our own health, but our habitat and the habitat of the people, plants, and animals with whom we share the planet."

It took a long time to make cigarette smoking illegal in cer-

tain public places, though the dangers had been clearly documented for decades. I hope that it does not take as long to make cell phones illegal in some places, especially moving vehicles, as well as elsewhere. Cell phones can be powerful forces in expanding the consumer culture and reducing embodied human relations and deep communication with others that involves texture, emotion, and nuances. ❁

It took a long time to make cigarette smoking illegal in certain public places, though the dangers had been clearly documented for decades. I hope that it does not take as long to make cell phones illegal in some places, especially moving vehicles, as well as elsewhere. Cell phones can be powerful forces in expanding the consumer culture and reducing embodied human relations and deep communication with others that involves texture, emotion, and nuances. ❁

At my farm now, families, school, church, and community groups come for visits. While we are sitting in a redwood circle outside, sometimes mobile phones go off. When, much to my amazement, guests answer, it takes them away from the present moment, and breaks the serene, meditative mood.

Most of the time, I watch with delight as youngsters interact with chickens on my small farm, look up with awe into the giant redwoods, feel their powerful dance partner the wind, and see the birds above. The 16-month-old who comes with his parents already knows how to stuff his mouth with berries, whose purple color rings his wide smile. But the demanding honks of cell phones and the urge to text distract from such community-building among humans, animals, plants, and the elements.

"Time poverty is now a recognized psychological and social stressor," accord-



Shepherd Bliss teaches part-time at Sonoma State University and owns the organic Kokopelli Farm. Shepherd lived in a cooperative while an undergraduate at the University of Kansas in

the 1960s and learned about gardening at Findhorn, Scotland, and from Scott and Helen Nearing in the 1980s. He has contributed to two dozen books, including editing and writing part of The New Holistic Health Handbook for Penguin in 1985. He can be reached at sbliss@hawaii.edu.

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The Index of Health and Well-Being Practitioners

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The Index of Health and Well-Being Practitioners was created as a resource for *Communities* readers to provide the contact information for health care providers of all specialties who live in, or are near to, intentional communities.

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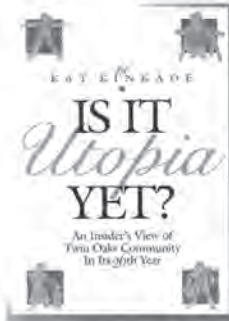
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An Insider's View of Twin Oaks Community in its 26th Year by Kat Kinkade

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COMMUNITY CURED MY ASTHMA AND ALLERGIES

(continued from p. 45)



loving community can provide, they may never even develop asthma or allergies in the first place. I've learned that instead of staying away from allergens completely and sterilizing the place, the body can self-immunize by being exposed to some allergens (see sidebar for asthma and allergy "treatments" that I now use). I've learned that relying on the wisdom and guidance of a whole community can actually be the unknown cure needed to get you moving in the right direction.

I had not previously considered the possibility of community support to help guide me toward a healthier path. Now, I am not so closed off and private about my personal health. Instead, I invite the community in and seek their guidance. In turn, people are more open with me about their needs, and I can share what I've learned. This not only saves a trip to the doctor from time to time, but often

simply saves the fear and worry that go along with dis-ease and poor health.

Thanks to my loving community who helped me see another path toward freedom of my dis-ease: Elizabeth DeJonge, Monika Krimendahl, Karen Zwart, Teresa O'Brien, Dr. Adam Fogg, Dr. Curtis Birky, Freda, Lakeshore Interfaith ashram, *Natural Health* magazine, that lady in the grocery store, Julius (my old dog), Groundswell Community Farm CSA and Providence Farms, Nature's Market staff, the many people who massaged me, and yes...Thanks Mom for checking to make sure I was still breathing every day! ❁

After struggling for 27 years with severe asthma and allergies, Mandy Creighton is freed from these dis-eases. She is now bicycling 12,000 miles around the US, filming and documenting visits to sustainable communities. View the project website at www.withinreachmovie.com.

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HEALTH AND QUIET

(continued from p. 80)

remember a quieter time in the past, and lament the sonic intrusions that have taken it away. Hempton believes that freedom from noise pollution is just as essential to our physical and emotional health, and as inalienable a human birthright, as clean air and clean water. And it is more than that. “Silence is not the absence of something but *the presence of everything...* It is the presence of time, undisturbed. It can be felt within the chest. Silence nurtures our nature, our human nature, and lets us know who we are. Left with a more receptive mind and a more attuned ear, we become better listeners not only to nature but to each other.”

Yet most of us are awash in human-generated sound, much of it unwanted by all except those responsible for generating it (and sometimes not even by them). Despite its corrosive effects on both us and the natural world, it has become the almost unquestioned medium in which modern civilization swims. To realize that things could be otherwise is to recognize the extent of our loss. Every creature, including our own, evolved in an environment in which our senses, including our hearing, needed to be finely attuned to the rest of the natural world to ensure our own survival. When artificial stimuli overwhelm, distract, and dull these senses, we lose a very real part of who we have always been as living creatures. We become not only deafened, but deadened. And other animals, who depend much more directly than humans now do on hearing exactly what is going on around them at all times, may find themselves unable to survive, reproduce, or even communicate amongst themselves with such constant noise intrusions.

Most of us have probably never in fact known the type of quiet Hempton describes as occurring at One Square Inch. The closest many of us have come to it may have been in the days following September 11, 2001, when commercial



jets stopped flying in United States airspace. To me and to almost everyone I've talked with about it, a strange, restorative calm seemed to settle over the land during that period, as we witnessed for the first time in our lives what daily existence without the intermittent rumble of airplanes must have been like. For many of us, the relative quiet was strangely exhilarating, a needed balm after the trauma that had precipitated it.

What does this all have to do with community? In Gordon's own words (via email), “The presence of quiet is important to communities. The research has shown that not only does noise pollution cause anti-social behavior, quiet allows people to communicate more easily, and



Chris Roth

be more relaxed, while also maintaining a sense of place.” My own experiences both in and out of community bear this out. While absolute natural silence is an unrealizable (and probably not even desirable) goal when living day-to-day in close proximity with others, assuring that members can find quiet when they need it—and honoring the place

of quiet in our lives—can be essential to protecting and maintaining both physical and emotional health. As Hempton points out, adequate quiet allows us to appreciate sound (whether natural or human-generated) and to explore inner and outer worlds that can fill us with gratitude rather than stress. It helps us tune in to our place on the planet and

to our own and others’ inner lives, in ways that become almost impossible in the presence of, for example, an active leaf blower.

Helpful appendixes describe the “Top 5 Ways to Quiet Your Home or Office” and “Top 5 Ways to Quiet Your Neighborhood” through savvy technical choices and cooperative measures with neighbors. These methods involve win-win solutions, improving everyone’s lives through applied awareness and intention without suppressing natural human self-expression. In fact, they *include* throwing parties. “If you want a quiet neighborhood, you need a healthy community,” Les Blomberg of the Noise Pollution Clearinghouse writes. “People tend to noise-pollute anonymously, so don’t be anonymous, and don’t let your neighbors be anonymous either. Get to know them, share tools, car-pool, invite them over. It’s unlikely they’ll wake you at 2 a.m. if they’re going to be your guests at 6 p.m.”

Naturalists and ornithologists will find Hempton’s natural-sound descriptions particularly fascinating, but one doesn’t have to be able to recognize every bird vocalization or the unique sonic signatures of different atmospheric conditions to appreciate the author’s experiences. I recommend this book for its ear-opening stories and perspectives, for its practical suggestions about how to reclaim healthy sound environments wherever we may be, and for the simple wisdom and groundedness it shares on nearly every page, even in the midst of high decibel counts. ❁



Chris Roth edits COMMUNITIES. A too-loud rock concert sent him scurrying off in search of quiet at the age of 18. His ears and psyche finally healed from the trauma, but he still loves quiet, and relies on it to produce this magazine.



Health and Quiet

By Chris Roth



One Square Inch of Silence: One Man's Search for Natural Silence in a Noisy World

By Gordon Hempton
and John Grossmann

Free Press, New York

Hardcover, 2009; paperback, March 2010; 368 pages plus enhanced CD with soundscapes and photos

Some would accuse Gordon Hempton of being an idealistic dreamer, a man obsessed with impossible goals, an advocate of standards he himself can't maintain, a tilter at windmills. (And he does, in fact, tilt at a windmill, or at least measure its one-minute average noise at 50 decibels, when he stops near it in a Nebraska grassland.) But dismissing him and his attempts to defend and restore natural silence as "impractical" and "unrealistic" seems like a too-easy form of denial.

Hempton is the creator of One Square Inch of Silence (www.OneSquareInch.org), a project to protect one of the few remaining places on the planet where natural silence (best defined as the full, unmasked, and undiluted *presence* of natural sounds) reigns: a spot deep in the Hoh Rain Forest, part of Olympic National Park in Washington. Here, human-generated noise rarely intrudes.

"Rarely," in this case, is a relative term; it means an average of less than one noise intrusion every 15 minutes. According to the author, all but a dozen or so places in the United States experience more than four "human noise events" every hour. Except in that handful of locations, Hempton, an Emmy Award-winning natural sound recordist, typically can't record anything for more than a few minutes without a plane, highway traffic, a mine, a chainsaw, or some other anthropogenic noise intruding on the soundscape.

Because of the distance sound travels, protecting one square inch in the Hoh entirely from human noise—preserving it as a sanctuary for only natural sounds, in the same manner we protect the unique elements of other endangered ecosystems—would in fact reduce noise intrusion (from such things

as jet overflights) for 1000 square miles. After establishing the project and the sanctuary (marked by a stone, a log, and a jar for visitors' "Quiet Thoughts"), Hempton embarks on a cross-country trip to explore natural and unnatural soundscapes, talk with people about natural quiet and the effects of noise in their lives, and ultimately lobby officials in Washington, DC to enact regulation or legislation to protect the natural sonic environment, especially in places like Olympic and other National Parks. Ironically, the vehicle for his journey is a loud Volkswagen bus, and, to fulfill unavoidable personal commitments, he makes two plane flights back to Washington State during the course of his cross-country journey. He freely acknowledges the irony of contributing to the very noise he is wishing to diminish—an irony which serves, if anything, to highlight, rather than discredit, his observations of our modern condition.

Hempton and co-author John Grossmann write with clarity, natural storytelling ability, a poetic sense, and, most important, an "ear" for the world around them. Reading Hempton's adventures involving his sound meter, recording equipment, other listeners, random strangers—and, most important and always, what he is hearing, whether bird songs or the Indianapolis Motor Speedway—I found my own awareness of the sounds around me heightened. Through his narrative, Hempton reveals profound truths with which much of the modern world seems to be entirely out of sync—among them, that quiet (freedom from noise intrusion) is essential to our and ultimately every creature's health and well-being. Those of us

"Not only does noise pollution cause anti-social behavior, quiet allows people to communicate more easily, be more relaxed, and maintain a sense of place."

who lack adequate natural silence in our lives, who must listen instead to a near-constant sonic backdrop of motor vehicles, airplanes, machines, buildings, electronic gadgets, and various earth-altering projects going on around us, expose ourselves to stresses unknown until relatively recent history. "The day will come when man will have to fight noise as inexorably as cholera and the plague," Nobel Prize-winning bacteriologist Robert Koch warned in 1905; that day has undeniably drawn nearer.

Studies have shown noise pollution to diminish mental functioning, retard learning, encourage disease, precipitate aggressive behavior, impede the formation and maintenance of social relationships, and generally wreak havoc with us both as individuals and as a society. When asked about it, almost all of the people Hempton encounters and questions on his journey

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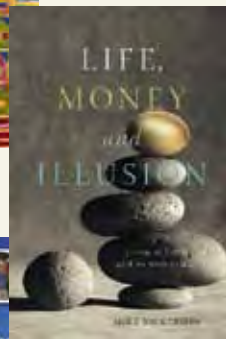


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~ Niánn Emerson Chase

"The secret of the mystery of illness and healing has to do with destiny."

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