

FINDING COMMUNITY AFTER "COMMUNITY"

COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

The Many Faces OF COMMUNITY

The Urge to Connect
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Winter 2015 • Issue #169

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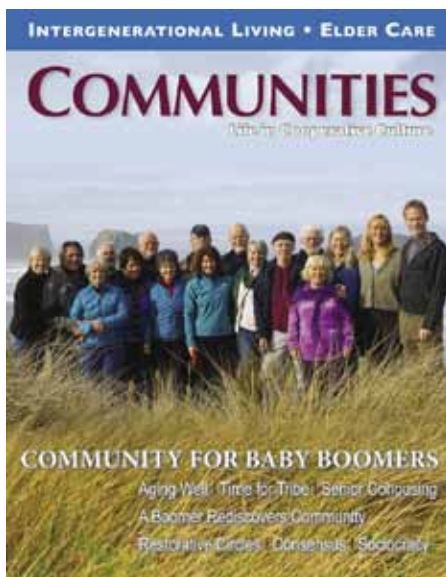
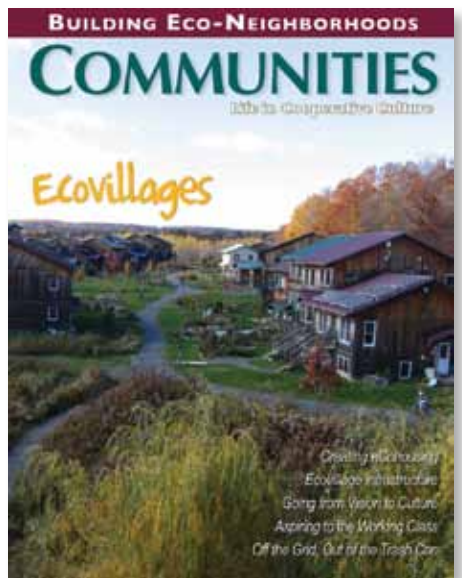
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Tarenta Baldeschi, Blue Evening Star, and Kamon Lilly share concepts and experiences of ecovillage living during a sustainability workshop at American and Mexican students from Cochise Junior College at Avalon Organic Gardens & EcoVillage in Tumacácori, Arizona. Photo courtesy of Global Change Media.

COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

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Letters



Community and the Law

I've read (READ) 90 percent of this current issue (COMMUNITIES #168), and will read the other 10 percent soon.

It's an amazing and informative issue that will definitely help me understand the legal, political, and personal issues that ICs face. And I'll definitely be putting that info to use in the future when I start doing some volunteer (that will...sigh...probably turn into paid) work for a local affordable housing advocacy nonprofit in Cleveland.

Keep up the good work,

Eileen Beal
Cleveland, Ohio

Great Issue

I just wanted to thank you for the excellent current issue of the magazine (#168). I felt like it covered a topic long inadequately addressed among communitarians. Communities in the past has focused heavily on what I would call "internal" matters important to group survival—leadership, governance, group process, decision-making structures, and the like. But external issues are also important. A great many communities have been unable to overcome social prejudices against their very existence, prejudice em-

bodied in zoning laws and other restrictive mechanisms. Others violate the law and live in fear that they'll be discovered. No matter how solid you are internally, those outside pressures can be quite a burden.

Again, a great issue. Many thanks.

Tim Miller
Department of Religious Studies
University of Kansas

Wild Harvest

Thank you for the warning about the graphic butchering descriptions in the "Food and Community" issue (#167). I took the warning and skipped that article. Proceeding, however, to the article on training huntresses, I found myself bemused by certain phrases implying that people who don't eat animals aren't actively participating in the cycle of life (ha!), and that the only way to feel connected to the forest through our eating is to hunt wild animals. How about wild mushrooms, hazelnuts, all sorts of berries; or, in forest openings, camas and other wild starchy roots, and wild seed harvests such as tarweeds and grasses, eh?

Greta Loeffelbein
Cottage Grove, Oregon

Editor's Note: Our warning concerned the article "Glimpsing the Wild Within: The Sacred Violence of Eating," by Lindsay Hagamen. While some readers steered away from it (pun probably intended), others partook—including the editor of *Utne Reader*, long-time bastion of the alternative press, who promptly contacted us to request reprint permission. Lindsay's piece appeared in full in *Utne Reader's* Fall 2015 issue, which also featured it on the cover and even the spine. Hopefully many more readers will now be able to ruminate not only about our relationship to what we eat but also about the role of community in how we eat and live (aspects which were as essential to the article as the somewhat bloody bits).

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!

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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

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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.



Raines Cohen

An Evolving Movement

As the Fellowship for Intentional Community approaches its 30th birthday we're stepping into a major transition period. In the Fall 2015 issue of COMMUNITIES, Laird Schaub announced his retirement as Executive Director of the FIC, and identified me as his successor. I'd like to introduce myself and talk about where we've been and where I think we're heading as an organization and a movement.

My name is Sky Blue. I'm 35 years old and have lived collectively for a total of 18 years. It was a surprise to find myself moving into this new role, but in retrospect it makes perfect sense. Unbeknownst to me, I've been training for this job my entire adult life.

Community is in my blood

My parents met at Twin Oaks Community in Virginia in the late '70s. My older half-brother, having spent time at Twin Oaks as a child, moved back when he was an adult. He later moved to East Wind Community in Missouri, where I visited him when I was 18, my first experience of community. My older half-sister spent most of her college career in the student housing cooperatives at UC Berkeley. My father helped found Valley Oaks Village Cohousing in Chico, California.

It goes back further. My great-great-grandfather was a campaign organizer for Eugene Debs, presidential candidate for the Socialist Party in the early 1900s. My grandmother did bridge-building between the Green and Democratic parties in San Diego, and wrote grants for her public library for solar panels and other environmental improvements. I'm grateful and proud of the lineage of community-builders I come from, and I'm passing it on. My 13-year-old son has been raised at Twin Oaks, growing up in the culture of sharing and cooperation that we are working to build.

Community is where I come from, and it's what I've devoted my life to.

Resume by accident

I moved to Twin Oaks as a fresh-faced, idealistic 19-year-old, already holding visions of creating a new community. I'd gotten a start in community living at the cohousing community with my dad, and then in the Cesar Chavez Student Housing Cooperative in Santa Cruz, California. I'd dropped out of college in part because I was learning more from the co-op than I was from my classes, and I wanted to follow that passion. After moving to

Twin Oaks, I soon got involved with managing our tofu business and our annual Communities Conference. I started doing facilitation and mediation in the community, too, and became one of the delegates to the Federation of Egalitarian Communities. I was eager to learn, and Twin Oaks provided ample opportunity. Eventually I served a term on the community's Board of Planners, helping to create new policies and run the yearly budgeting process that sustains this income-sharing community of 90 adults, 16 kids, and a budget of over \$1 million. Living in community invariably demands a lot from people, and so we do our best to meet the needs we see around us, picking up skills along the way. I didn't mean to be building a resume; it just sort of happened.

In 2008 I moved to Charlottesville, the city closest to Twin Oaks, and pursued an urban community-building strategy. I lived in a collective house, helped start two small cooperative businesses, helped get a truck-share started, worked with Food Not Bombs and an alternative transportation agency, and organized potlucks and movie nights, among other things. I wanted to see how much of the lifestyle of Twin Oaks could be incorporated into a life in the city while also making that lifestyle available to others. During this time I acted as staff facilitator for PEACH, a fund for major health care incidents and lending, with about three quarters of a million dollars in assets, created and managed by communities in the Federation of Egalitarian Communities. What mattered was building community, for myself and others, and I learned what I needed to in order to help move projects forward.

Getting involved

I was surprised and flattered to be recruited for the FIC Board about two years ago. I was told the organization recognized the need for newer, younger people to step in, bring new excitement, and help things evolve. I love developing things, so this was the perfect pitch. I'd been on the periphery of FIC activity for 15 years. To be honest, my perception of the organization was that it was somewhat narrow in its focus and in danger of becoming antiquated. I thoroughly believed in the FIC and recognized the importance of its efforts, particularly in the Communities Directory and this magazine. The fact that this organization has accomplished so much on a shoestring budget, without foundation or government funding, verges on miraculous, and is a testament to the dedication of the people who've built it over the last 28 years. Being offered a chance to come in and stir things up was too good to pass up. I joined in May of 2014, and almost immediately heard that Laird was interested in phasing out of the ED role. I expressed interest, and in May of this year, the Board made the decision. It's an honor to be given this responsibility.

It happened quickly. The FIC and I hadn't dated very long before we got married. But we'd known each other a long time, and I have a tendency to jump into things.

Where have we been, and where are we going?

The history of the FIC goes back to its predecessor organization, the Fellowship of Intentional Communities, which was an association of a specific group of communities for mutual aid, created in 1940. But we come from a legacy that goes further back, to the Cooperative Communities of the mid-1800s, which were inspired by communities and societies going further back in North America and abroad. It also runs parallel the cooperative housing movement, which also dates back to the 1800s and is currently expressed by the North American Students of Cooperation (formed 1968) and the National Association of Housing Cooperatives (formed 1952). The FIC represents far more than '60s communes or the communities they inspired; however, for the vast majority of people I talk to, that's the predominant association in their minds. (The recent piece by ABC Nightline on Twin Oaks used the words hippie or commune a total of eight times, even though Twin Oaks wasn't started by hippies; the segment failed to mention Behaviorism and the book *Walden II* as the inspiration for the community.)

And the landscape of intentional communities has evolved considerably since the FIC started 28 years ago. Cohousing was imported from Europe, with the first community finished and occupied in 1991. The Ecovillage movement started in the mid-'90s, with the Ecovillage Network of the Americas, a region of the Global Ecovillage Network, form-

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ing around 1996. Urban community-building has become prominent, with formal and informal collective households popping up frequently, often in conjunction with urban agriculture projects, and coliving and coworking models have become a recent trend.

The worker co-op movement is also on the rise, with the formation of the US Federation of Worker Cooperatives in 2004, playing a more active role in the cooperative business world. The movement is somewhat stratified between more mainstream institutions like credit unions and rural agricultural and electric co-ops, and the more radical food co-ops and worker co-ops. Where intentional communities have focused on the residential aspects of shared resources, worker co-ops in particular focus on the financial. It's easy to see them as two sides of the same coin, especially when you look at intentional communities that incorporate cottage industries. But significant differences both culturally and in their affiliations have kept them siloed.

Other important players in the mix now include the Transition Town and Permaculture movements, the New Economy Coalition, the various Solidarity Economic networks, Maker Spaces, and online sharing platforms like Shareable.net and Kindista.org. People within all of these different groups increasingly seem to recognize that social, ecological, and economic concerns are all inextricably intertwined, and that community—manifested in the daily, personal relationships between people and the concerns they share—is at the center of it all. The FIC is one player in this very large movement towards a just and sustainable human society. We have a lot to offer and a lot to learn.

Closer to home, as new, innovative models of intentional community pop up, we need to make sure we're staying connected to what's going on and responding to the evolving needs and aspirations of different groups. Many new groups form spontaneously without knowledge of the larger movement and history of intentional community. Some are hesitant to associate themselves with groups that might give people the wrong impression; others are excited to find they have allies out in the world. Networks are only as powerful as the people and organizations that make them up. The FIC has developed a strong network over the years, but we need to keep strengthening it. We need to make sure we're offering a mutually beneficial relationship. We need to do a better and better job of providing products and services that support the development of intentional communities and cooperative culture, and find the allies we need to build our capacity to make a bigger impact in the world.

And, it's time the world knew! Intentional communities have been getting more media attention recently. In the last year, Twin Oaks has been visited by Al Jazeera America, Yahoo! News, CNN.com, and ABC Nightline News, all of which gave positive (if at times patronizing) spins on the community and lifestyle. Societal awareness of the global problems facing humanity is on the rise and people are looking for solutions. We certainly don't have all the answers, but we have important pieces of the puzzle and we have a responsibility to share what we've learned.

Moving forward together

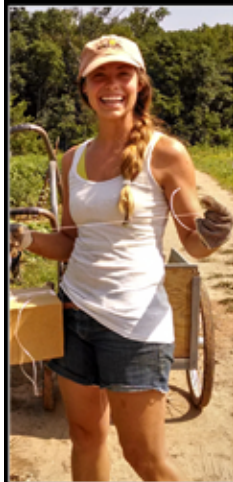
The FIC's mission is to support and promote the development of intentional communities and the evolution of cooperative culture. As I transition into the role of Executive Director, I have two questions for you: What can the FIC do for you? What can you do for the FIC? We all want to change the world. It's going to take a community effort. 🐦

Sky Blue is incoming Executive Director of the Fellowship for Intentional Community. Reach him at sky@ic.org.

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Many Faces

Neighbors, friends, and community-mates from several generations enjoy a hayride together near Pleasant Hill, Oregon, Halloween 2015.



Chris Roth

First, a word about what this issue is *not*. Despite what the title might imply, it is not an exploration of diversity (racial or any other type) in *communitarians*—although there is real diversity in the builders of and participants in community described herein. Nor is it an examination of the many moods (and accompanying facial expressions) that participation in cooperative ventures can prompt in individuals or collectives. Nor is it an exposé of clashing public/private appearances: for example, rosy public images cultivated by groups vs. members’ thorny experiences within them—or, conversely, uninformed public prejudices against groups vs. the much rosier truth about them. We’ve covered some of those themes in previous issues and will address others in the future.

Instead, this issue on “The Many Faces of Community” is about the diverse forms the experience of *community itself* may take—whether within classical intentional communities (the kinds that list themselves in the *Communities Directory* and on ic.org, and almost always feature heavily in our pages) or in schools, neighborhoods, workplaces, extended networks and alliances, etc.

Our issue is sponsored by the High Wind Association, founded in 1977, which shepherded the High Wind intentional community in Plymouth, Wisconsin from 1981 through its formal end as an intentional community in 1991 (it continued as a learning center for another decade). Since then, alumni of the group’s residential community and of its educational programs have continued to explore and spread community in many different forms throughout the world—as some of them had even before High Wind’s creation. In addition to supporting this issue financially, the High Wind Association’s Board and members of their extended network provided eight of the stories (and one poem) in this issue—half of

the main theme articles. Our own network of contributors (including some new authors) supplied the rest, as well as the additional non-theme pieces.

We especially want to thank Belden and Lisa Paulson, who spearheaded this effort and guided the nearly year-long project of creating their group’s collection of articles (from initial brainstorming to final versions). A couple of their network members’ contributions ended up not fitting into this mix, but nonetheless provided grist for the editorial mill as we assembled it.

Providing resources to encourage “Cultivating Community Where You Are” (both within and outside of formal intentional communities) has been a major component of the Fellowship for Intentional Community’s work over the last decade, and we hope this issue of COMMUNITIES will provide even more ideas about how to do it, along with inspiring examples of how it happens whenever we follow our cooperative impulses and inclinations. A relatively small slice of the world population lives in “intentional community,” but huge numbers of people recognize how essential “community” is not only to surviving but to thriving as human beings. These same people often yearn for more of it in their lives. We’d like COMMUNITIES to reach these readers, not just those with an interest in living in an intentional community. The laboratory of community (in its many forms, and with its many faces) has lessons for all of us.

Thanks again for joining us, for sharing this magazine with others, and for supporting us in whatever ways you can, giving future readers a chance to reap the benefits of the stories told in COMMUNITIES. 🍁

Chris Roth edits COMMUNITIES.

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Faces of Community

By Michael Wherley

Community can range from two people sharing together to all life on the planet. My experience of community spans from simple friendships and loving relationships that nurture the soul, to shared housing, to shared projects that make the community a richer place to live, to larger political movements in the public interest, to a numinous oneness with nature. Sharing skills, creativity, and knowledge lubricates relationships and forges bonds of togetherness. When community flows there's a palpable excitement in sharing the best of ourselves. The more we each contribute from a centered place of being, the richer the personal rewards received. A spirit of goodwill, commitment to the greater good, a willingness to dream together, and an open heart unlock the door to great things.

Ample amounts of time spent together, lots of positive encouragement, and a gentle honesty make community work at its highest levels. Shared creative pursuits such as music, dance, theater, and art in many forms provide the spice. Celebration and ritual renew the spirit and vitality of community and serve to harmonize body, mind, and heart for the individual and the group. Time apart for contemplation and re-creation provides an important balance.

The images I share here represent in visual form some of the many faces of community that I've experienced and witnessed over the years at home and abroad. I hope you enjoy them. 🌸

Michael Wherley was born in an urban edge suburb of Cleveland six decades ago. Seeking something new and different, he migrated to the San Francisco Bay Area for school and a variety of other life lessons in community, then moved to Eugene, Oregon a quarter century ago, volunteering in nature education activities for much of that time and participating in community-based choir, gamelan, and marimba performances.

His attraction to photography began with a box camera at age 10, was stoked by a couple of courses in college, went on hiatus after photographing his travels in his 20s, and blossomed again with the advent of digital cameras and increasing travel opportunities in the last decade. A wide range of his work can be seen at dancingphotons.com.



*Potter's smile:
a crafter's joy of
offering her
wares at
the Oregon
Country Fair.*



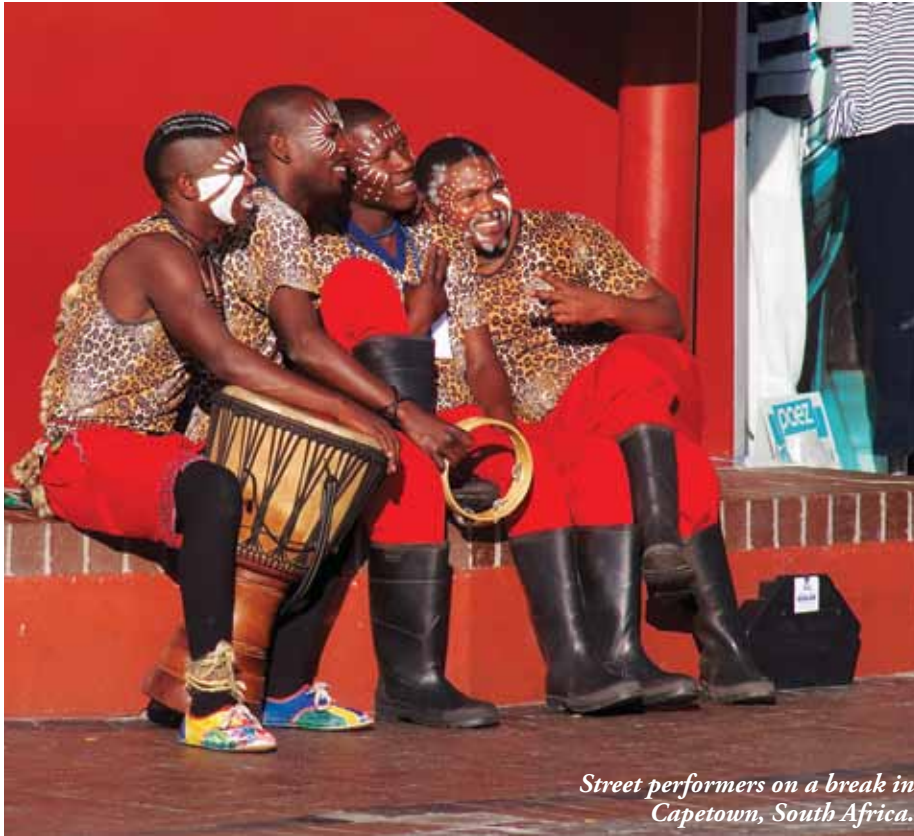
*A birthday celebration in the
Durban Botanic Gardens, South Africa.*

Spider woman shares her wisdom at the Haunted Hike by Nearby Nature.



Sacred circle dancers share the myths of the tradition.





Street performers on a break in Capetown, South Africa.



Local food lovingly grown for sale at the farmers' market.



School Garden Project celebration of growing and learning.



Fancy braids: the joy of sharing at the Oregon Country Fair.



Samba Ja community samba band performs at fall festival.



Young women mugging for the camera in Springbok, South Africa.



Sharing gardening wisdom at native plant education day.



Nature educator talking turtle at birthday party.



Sidewalk art: the joy of chalk art creation at da Vinci Days in Corvallis, Oregon.



Tumbling dance performance during the Whiteaker Block Party, Eugene.

FINDING COMMUNITY Outside of “Community”

By Sam Makita

In intentional community circles we use the phrase “in community.” Like, “This is how we handle conflict in community,” “Life is so much better in community,” and “How long have you been living in community?” It’s a matter of convenience, I guess, to leave out the word “intentional” but the truth is, even those of us who don’t live in intentional communities live “in community” with other people and organisms. Our non-intentional communities are colorful and complicated and not always unintentional.

I left Dancing Rabbit (near Rutledge, Missouri) about a year ago. Since then, I’ve slowly been acclimating to life on the outside (I moved to Bakerton, West Virginia). The rules are different out here, and “community” means something different. Out here, a community is a more fluid thing. In some cases the communities I’ve found in my post-community life have been intentional, even if they’re not “intentional communities” in the vernacular of folks in community. In other cases, community pops up quite unintentionally. Here are some examples.

Communities I Took with Me

What’s the one community that communitarians and non-communitarians participate in with equal vigor? What community has become vitally important to the “communities” movement over the last couple decades, even though many people in this community have never heard of COMMUNITIES? The internet, of course. There are online communities of embroiderers, gamblers, recovering gamblers, teachers, students, every sexuality you can think of, church goers, scuba divers, science fiction writers, and book makers.

Each interest, or sub-community, has its own forums, blogs, and Facebook pages. People get to know each other, share ideas and information, have relationships, and conduct business. On the internet we can find people with whom we want to share certain aspects of ourselves and share exactly what we want. It’s like intentional community with protection. You’ve heard of the power of two feet; Facebook and other online communities afford us the power of the unsubscribe button.

I make my living from home, and until recently my son was home schooled, too. In the winter we can go a week at a time without stepping foot outside the door. Our primary community is each other.

We have agreements and responsibilities, and we rely on each other in the most basic ways. We’re governed by a system of informed and compassionate dictatorship. I can’t really say our relationship began intentionally, but we hold the health of our tiny community—one adult, one child, one cat, and five fish—purposefully.

The Bus Stop

Just a few days ago, the child started back in public school, in part to offer him more opportunities for relationships with peers, mentors, and those who might learn from him. I have more quiet time to work uninterrupted and I feel the ease that comes with something very important (my kid’s education) being taken up by someone besides myself. Plus he finally learned to tie his own shoes, in order to avoid embarrassment in front of the other kids at school. The unexpected

benefit has been getting to know our neighbors better, and getting to be known by them.

Waiting for the bus to arrive the first day I found out that there are a lot more kids within walking distance of us than I ever knew. Kids I’d never met came out of houses I can see from my bedroom window. There’s a little girl named Sam (like me!), and a two other boys in my son’s grade. Unlike families at Dancing Rabbit, and other intentional communities,

we can live out here almost on top of each other and never have a reason to interact.

The really valuable thing for me happens on the other end of the day. Around four o’clock the grown-ups start drifting toward the bus stop and hanging around. There are younger kids to entertain and be entertained by. Cigarettes are smoked. Shit is shot, judgments passed, and vetting accomplished. Now the other parents in the neighborhood know what I do for a living, my marital status, and what I smell like. And I know those things about them. We make eye contact, and share the experience of the bus being late, of missing our kids, and of being glad to see them again. We share a thunderstorm, a newspaper, and space.

Little Things

There are little micro-communities that form among just a few people, or just for a few moments, all over the place, if I’m looking for them. The four people standing at the gas pumps on a cold day,



Photo courtesy of Sam Makita

for example. We're all cold. We're all watching the dollars roll away on the pump dial. We have four different lives, we're going four different directions, but for now, we're all here, doing this thing together. There's the funny little dance two people do when they encounter a door that could be held, that one person goes through first and the other second. The laugh, the thanks, and the parting.

These were the encounters that comforted me on the long drive from DR to our new home. They showed me that people are connected, though lightly, even in the briefest encounters.

Taxpayers

When we first arrived in our new area, we didn't have a place to stay. The weather was warm enough, and we were prepared enough, that we could stay in a campground until we found a place to rent. That campground wouldn't have been there if it weren't for the community that is the county deciding that money and land should be used for public parks. The same goes for the Community Center and its gymnastics and dance classes, the public library with its free internet, roads, and all the other things that taxpayers and donors pay for at least in part.

Even without the public funding, those examples of common infrastructure represent the decisions of a community about what's important to make available to everyone, and what ways they want to share and interact with each other. We went to see the fireworks at the Community Center and it felt like the whole county was there. It's not the kind of community that we get "in community" with consensus models and big financial or ideological buy-in, but it is an aspect of community that exists everywhere in the US, and most of the world.

One of the major differences between my life in community and my life finding community in the wider culture is that if I don't want to be involved in decision making, I don't have to. It's still an element of community, but it's not something I feel obliged to participate in directly. From what I read in the local paper, it's just as full of listening and not listening, speaking and not speaking, good and bad choices, and vociferous Monday morning quarterbacking as governance in community, and I think I'll steer clear. That's just me, though, and I count myself fortunate that I live in a community (the United States, my new home state, my new home county and town) where other people are willing to step up and do the governance.

The Co-op

One of the first things I sought out when we landed here was the local UNFI co-op. I found it. I can order UNFI once a month and pick up some "extras" that my regular grocery store doesn't carry. I thought finding and joining the co-op would be a major part of building my new life here, but it hasn't really worked out that way. I see my work shift co-workers once every few months,

and we haven't really clicked. Despite having in common that we are somewhat particular about our food and toothpaste choices, we haven't become best friends in the eight hours we've spent together, bored and resentful of spending our Saturday mornings sorting other people's food orders.

Bulk food purchases in low-overhead business models are an element of community that I appreciate, though. It's not the most efficient food distro I've ever seen, but I feel grateful I found one at all.

The Neighborhood

Besides the library, the co-op, and public school, I also appreciate the run-of-the-mill suburban grocery store and our neighborhood general store. The grocery store is part of a system of sharing labor and resources that means I don't have to grow all the food my family eats. I have to write stuff and do other services for people all over the world, in exchange for funds I can spend on some truly luxurious food stuffs. It's all part of the global economic community.

The general store is even better. It's a lot like a suburban American version of Dancing Rabbit's Milkweed Mercantile and The Grocery Store combined. The entry way even acts kind of like the neighborhood "all" list. There are several bulletin boards and a business card rack where folks can post available goods and services, lost items, and other kinds of requests. I successfully scored bottles for my wine- and beer-making, and unsuccessfully tried to get people to sign up for RelayRides.com so I could sell my truck and still count on having a vehicle available when I need one.

The store owners must go out and get one of every essential—cereal, aluminum foil, butter, cake mix, even soy milk—and replace it when someone buys it. It's super handy for those "oh crap, we're out of x" moments and an easy walk for everyone in our little neighborhood. Those who can walk, anyway.

It was before we moved here, but the story goes that the house next door to ours

used to belong to an elder who had trouble getting to the store. Neighbors would stop by to bring him necessities and visit with him. Community.

It's the kind of community politicians want to evoke when they say things like "in our communities" and it shares a lot of the good elements with our lives at Dancing Rabbit. We're surrounded by people who know our names, and watch out for us. It's a slower process out here than in a group like DR that makes helping newcomers get settled and feel welcome a very intentional part of the responsibility of individuals in the group, but it is happening.

Our neighbors on the other side have helped us feel welcomed, too. They bring over flowers, and corn, and other little gifts for us. They let us pick from their cherry trees, and we brought back jam and sourdough bread for them. There are friends for my kid in the houses on our block, and they can ride bikes and skateboards back

(continued on p. 74)

We're all cold, and watching the dollars roll away on the gas pump dial. We have different lives, are going different directions, but for now, we're all here, doing this thing together.

Offerings to the Land

By Mary Murphy

I can't remember a time when I didn't feel as though the trees, rocks, rivers, hills, lakes, and mountains were my trusted friends and confidants. I have heard of studies that show a long walk in nature to be as effective as antidepressant medication, and other studies measuring how the number of close friends one has increases one's mental resiliency and lifespan. To me these two assets, green places and friends, are at least somewhat interchangeable. I've had many a good long cry by a sympathetic river or a favorite tree that leaves me feeling lighter and clearer about what I must do than any visit to a therapist ever has. I also tend my green places like one might care for a friend, heading out into the woods with my ax and saw to trim back the trails, chop a path through fallen trunks, and open up new views. When I return to my family's home, a walk down the trail to the rocky Maine shore is just as important as paying a visit to Grandma.

I have been a wanderer most of my adult life, a nomadic wilderness guide who moves with the seasons and goes where the next job leads her. Most of my jobs involve a strong sense of community, and on the occasions when I've needed a place to live that is not a tent, I usually rent a room in a large house share to enjoy another layer of camaraderie. Human community has been abundant in my life and it is important to me, and yet wherever I go, I find that my deepest sense of connection is with the land itself, not the human beings.

I know a few other people who are this passionate about the land itself as a friend, but not a huge number. People often chuckle at me when I get excited about introducing them to a tree I know. There is a spectrum of relationship to the land: some exploit it only as an industrial or agricultural resource, some value it vaguely for "ecological services" like carbon sequestration, others are appreciative or even passionate about the beauty of a landscape, as if it were a fine painting. What I'm talking about is having an actual relationship with the land, a friendship, a flirtation, and a sense of community. This happens when you come to know a specific

place so deeply that it ceases to be interchangeable. When you visit a place often enough and pay close attention, you no longer think that *this* pine tree is the same as all the others. You come to know its exact shape and its relationship to everything around it. It becomes *your* pine tree, not in the sense of you owning it, but in the sense that someone is *your* friend: you are in particular and specific relationship with it.

Once trees and trails and hills become specific and non-interchangeable to you, it becomes possible to care enough to put some effort into the relationship. You might take the time to prune the tree when a limb becomes diseased, or build a little shrine of stones and flowers at its base, or show up at a planning commission meeting when someone proposes a new building where your tree-friend now stands. Intimate relationship with your surroundings gives the land a face and a story for you. Once this happens, you understand how the land in a far away place also has a face and a story for someone else. You can't help but care.

While your friendship with the land may inspire you to give, you will also receive much from it. The land gives us beauty, health, and a renewal of spirit. The land is also a very steady friend. While some of its moods are more inviting than others, it is always present for you and has much wisdom to teach. I often get my best ideas when walking down a trail. The gifts of the land are freely given to anyone, but you have to take the time to build a connection to receive the full bounty. The land reserves its best gifts for the people it trusts.

Here are some suggestions for nurturing your sense of friendship with the land. You can do these alone or as group activities with your community. Some of these ideas are easier to implement in a rural area, but many can be done even in small green spaces in the city.

1. Learn to identify the species of the trees and plants you can see out of the windows of your home or office. Learn the names of any hills or bodies of water you can see. Tree



Learning to Track: Students track forest creatures through the snow at a Mountainsong Expeditions class.

identification guides and local topographical maps are usually available at your public library.

2. If you have a meditation practice, find a place you can practice it outside.
3. Pick a specific "sit spot" to return to once a day or once a week. Visit it throughout the seasons and at different times of day. Just observe.
4. Walk or run on trails near where you live. Learn them so well that you don't need a map.
5. Sing to a tree or a rock. Try different songs and see if you can sense which ones it likes the most.
6. Read books which describe a mystical connection with the land and its intelligence. Try *The Wood Wife* by Terry Windling, *The Magic of Findhorn* by Paul Hawkin, or *The Enchanted* by Elizabeth Coatsworth.
7. Make offerings to the land. In old European cultures in places like Ireland and Sweden, it was considered reckless not to leave a few offerings for the land spirits on a regular basis, in order to stay in their good graces. Try a little milk poured on the ground, a few shiny pennies, or some birdseed.
8. Create a shrine somewhere on the land you are befriending. This can be anything from a few stones or twigs arranged subtly at the base of a tree to raising some standing stones using local rocks. Be thoughtful about introducing manmade materials into your shrine, and don't use anything that could harm an animal or pollute the soil.
9. Climb trees.
10. Return your hair trimmings and nail clippings to the earth in a thoughtful way, conscious of the ways the earth feeds you and you can feed it.
11. Learn to identify the birdsongs of common species where you live.
12. Learn to identify wildlife tracks in the snow, mud, or sand.
13. Walk your land with a hunter and ask her to describe how she sees the landscape from the perspective of her quarry. You'll likely be shown details you never noticed before.
14. Hold meetings outside.
15. Go skinny dipping.
16. Take your problems and questions to the land. Hold a question in your heart while you wander through a natural area and notice what you encounter. Can you read a message in it?

(continued on p. 75)

April 6, 2015: Writing with the Land

The snowflakes twirled down today, out of a cotton-ball sky, dancing as if they don't know they'll melt when they hit the ground. They enjoy themselves while they are distinct. Perhaps they enjoy melting into the ground too, creeping up into the rootlets of a young fern and doing the Chlorophyll Waltz with the sunlight in the citron green leaves of spring. Winter has been my bedfellow for many long nights, wind howling down the valley to rock my little house like a ship at sea. I have curled into winter, soothed by the long dark nights. Who might I be when the spring comes? How will I melt into a new thing? How will the alchemy of sunlight work upon me? Where is the vein of sugar-sweet sap for me to tap, boiling away everything but what will fuel me, what will pleasure me, what will carry me forward? I want to turn over all the rocks, plumb the deep pools in the stream, climb the trees to see a wide view, and lie for days beside a little fawn, delicate and still, waiting for the moment when it will venture forth on uncertain legs and taste the green fern fronds made of snowflakes and sunlight.

—M.M.



*Caring for the Land:
Mountainsong Expeditions
instructor Jesse Scarlato
helps to keep the trails clear
on our Archery
Biathlon course.*



*Interdependence:
Heating my tiny house
with wood reminds me how
much I depend on
the local forest.*

Photos by Mary Murphy

THREE KINDS OF COMMUNITY— Three Kinds of Experience and Learning

By Belden Paulson

When I went overseas just after college I never imagined I'd end up working there with a movie actor in a high-stakes community project, or later become immersed in an inner city community about to explode, or help to organize an intentional community committed to sustainable living.

In my 20 years of schooling I learned a lot. But I soon found that the learning outside of the classroom and campus went way beyond even what my best teachers had to offer.

I. Community for Refugees

It began in the early 1950s. World War II had ended and Europe was just beginning to dig out from the rubble of massive destruction. After biking across the Swiss Alps with three classmates, and carrying rocks up a steep mountain in northern Italy to help build a youth center, I happened to meet Dr. Teofilo Santi.

An Italian medical doctor from south Italy, he was volunteering his skills and giving out food and clothing to thousands of people living in caves and ruins in Naples. Naples was one of Europe's most heavily bombed cities, and Santi's work centered in the slums where most of the homeless existed on the margin of life. He invited me to join him and his dedicated staff if I agreed to stay for at least six months. My subsistence would be covered.

I soon saw that simple relief work wouldn't solve the problem. Together, then, Santi and I organized *Casa Mia* (My Home), a social assistance center in the heart of the rubble. Every day we served hundreds of the homeless with meals, clothes for entire families, a kindergarten, literacy classes, vocational training, and a medical clinic, as well as helping to find jobs and new housing. We recognized that only comprehensive help, becoming involved with whole families over a long period, could lift these

desperate war victims out of hopelessness.

In 1953 I finally left Naples with my future wife, Lisa, whom I'd met at *Casa Mia*. My plan was to enter grad school back home. First, though, I spent a couple of days orienting my successor, Don Murray, a conscientious objector who was putting in his two years of alternative service.

Three years later, Don called me. Back in America, he had just finished his first film, *Bus Stop*, playing opposite Marilyn Monroe. I hadn't known he'd been an off-Broadway actor; now he was up for an Oscar and was in the Midwest on a promotional tour. Lisa and I had since married and now lived in the "rabbit patch," a warren of prefab huts for student couples at the University of Chicago.

Don stopped by, and the three of us sat up most of the night reminiscing about Italy. Don said, "I have a few dollars in my pocket now, but I'm not ready yet to go to Hollywood to be one more movie star. There are thousands of refugees still stagnating in those barbed wire camps in Italy and I want to go back to help. I need you."

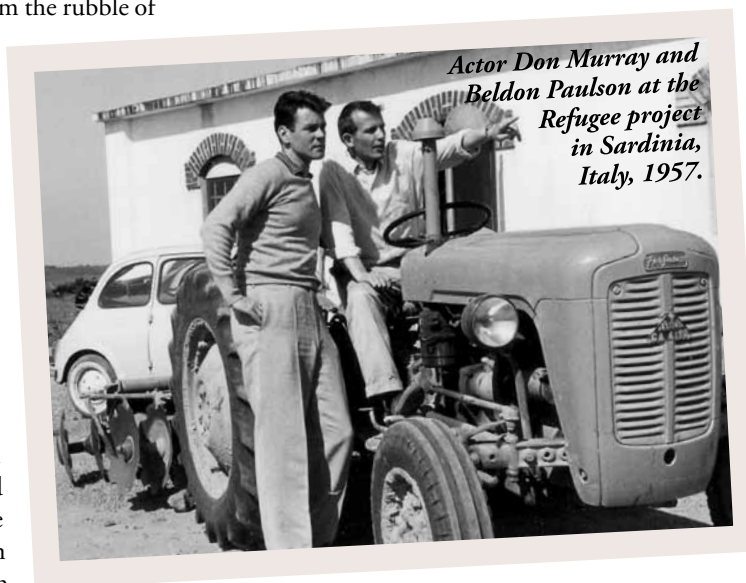
While working with homeless Neapolitans, another of our assignments with Dr. Santi had been to

provide welfare for refugees in five camps ringing the city. These were Iron Curtain escapees from communist East Europe, as well as leftover "D.P.s" (displaced persons) still in camps after the war. They were all "hard-core"—they'd been rejected for emigration and all other solutions. The United Nations and Italian

Government authorities had given up on them.

I told Don I had a new wife and a two-week-old baby to consider, and had to finish my Ph.D. Don pleaded: "At least go back to Italy

with me to make a study." I did, and we ended up buying 135 acres of virgin land on Sardinia, the island off the west coast of



Actor Don Murray and Belden Paulson at the Refugee project in Sardinia, Italy, 1957.

Only comprehensive help, becoming involved with whole families over a long period, could lift these war victims out of hopelessness.

Italy. I postponed my degree, and Lisa, young Eric, and I moved there in 1957 for the next two years. Our project with Don gradually transferred 15 families, a few at a time, to Sardinia. We created a small community based in farming and small industries, such as poultry and manufacturing concrete blocks for refugee homes and the local market.

In the course of our two-year stay on Sardinia, and then two more with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees office in Rome, with a job to help clear the camps, there were valuable lessons:

1. Never Say Impossible.

We were told again and again by top authorities: “The project you propose to resettle hard-core refugees on Sardinia won’t work.

These refugees have lived in the camps for years and are completely dependent. Having been rejected by everyone, they have no faith or trust in anything. They will never become self-sufficient. We appreciate your youthful idealism, but you’d be wasting your time and our resources. Your project is impossible.” Don and I could only reply: “You’re probably right, but we’ll give it one last shot.”

The first Christmas, we invited the refugees in Sardinia to visit the camps again in order to take a break from their more rigorous life in our project. Obviously, their work had been hard compared to their former idle life. In the early months with us, even though they didn’t trust each other, they united as one bloc to voice their complaints against us, the Americans. I wrote Don in Hollywood: “Much as they hate the camps, they may not come back to us. We may have to accept that the authorities were right.” But every refugee did return to our community, and they brought several new ones. Their small industries began to flourish, they gained confidence, and integrated into the neighboring village. Later on, I asked the U.N. mental health consultant from Geneva who visited us: “How do you explain our success when others far more experienced failed?” He said: “You created a community where trust was built. This restored their faith

in themselves and in life. You showed them that when you plant a seed, it will grow. Also, you never read the details in their thick dossiers; since you didn’t know all their problems, you assumed they could make it.”

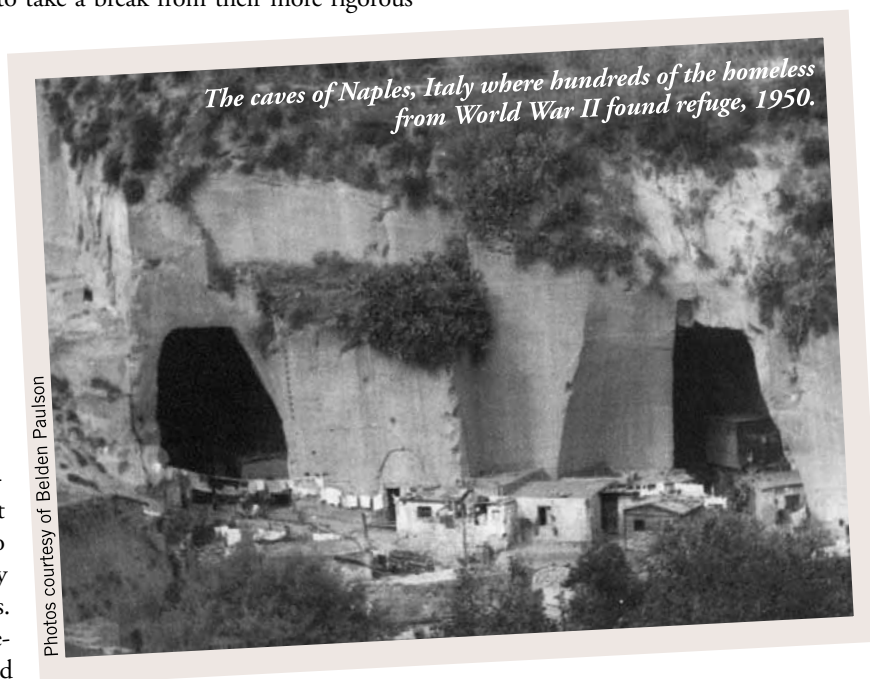


2. Equal Opportunity Doesn’t Assure the Same Outcomes.

We made sure that the minute the refugees left the camps they would be treated with maximum equality. This would be one way to build trust. But we soon found that this policy didn’t work. For instance, there was Mario from Yugoslavia. His resume included harrowing escapes from the Nazis and later the Tito communists. In the camps he’d lost one lung to T.B. and subsequently was rejected by 13 emigration commissions. It turned out that he was quite a

brilliant entrepreneur. We helped him to manage and eventually own the block industry, employing others. Or there was Nyc, a Czech, who had been in camp for years with unknown problems. Smart and independent, he worked his piece of land on his own; he hired no one and wouldn’t work for anyone. Or Tony, a Spaniard who’d been moved from camp to camp since the Spanish Civil War. He preferred to hire out for a daily wage so that he wouldn’t have to take personal responsibility.

Each refugee was absolutely unique. The dogma of “equal opportunity” really made little sense because each one related to opportunity differently and required different solutions to his needs.



Photos courtesy of Belden Paulson

II. Inner City Community

After the refugee work in Europe, Lisa and I returned home. I was soon dealing with a very different kind of community. I completed the Ph.D., and with two small sons now, we moved to Wisconsin in 1962

where I joined the University of Wisconsin faculty. Working out of Milwaukee and Madison, in due course I helped the university organize a new department dedicated to “doing something” about poverty and racism. This was not just an intellectual exercise; the city of Milwaukee’s inner core—the heart of one of America’s most

racially segregated ghettos—was ready to explode.

A several-square-mile area north of downtown, it had all the economic, social, political, and educational liabilities of disadvantaged central cities. People were not actually starving as they were in Naples, but they were more ready to challenge the system—violently if necessary. The university realized that it had to get involved.

The residents themselves referred to the area as “the community,” but their interpretation of community was quite different from that usually discussed in this magazine. Many people didn’t know or couldn’t personally relate to one another, yet their lives fit into an array of experiences, needs, and complaints they all shared. Their “community” was as well defined as any intentional community.

A brilliant local black activist, Reuben Harpole, took me under his wing. We sat in inner city bars, met pastors in the churches, spent hours in the schools and just meeting folks. Some local leaders thought an important need was to find out what was happening with the young people. My department helped to organize a house-to-house, random-sample survey covering 60 central city blocks. We trained 30 volunteers from the area and they administered 300 one-hour questionnaires.

We found not only shockingly deficient reading skills, but by the time the kids reached sixth and seventh grade, a cluster of related problems followed: school tardiness and absenteeism, then all the usual behavioral problems. We organized a summer demonstration reading project in one school located in the middle of the area. At first the kids wouldn’t show up, so our teachers had to go and actually drag them out of bed. But the project worked, and eventually it led to expanded cooperation with a sizable number of schools in the area.

Since these were local institutions, they needed empowering

support from the neighborhood. A nucleus of residents worked with us to create the Harambee Revitalization Project (Harambee is Swahili for “Let’s Pull Together”). HRP is a community organization initially based in

12 square blocks. Later it expanded to encompass 30,000 people. Given the multiple needs, along with the school projects we organized major initiatives dealing with housing and economic development, health, human services, and also the Ombudsman Project. This latter was an amazingly effective network of 200 block leaders trained to respond to the individual questions and problems of everyone on their block.

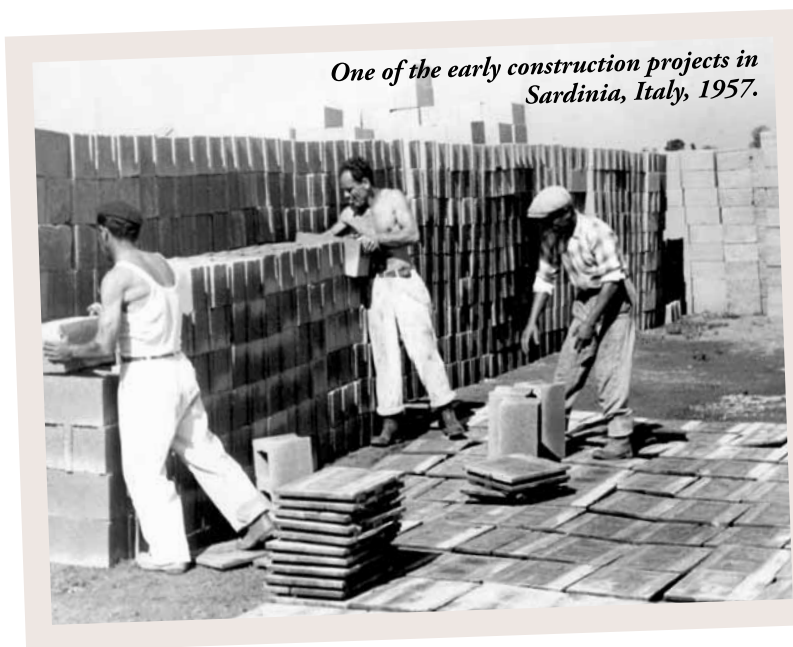
From this experience of serving an inner city community, here is what became clear:

1. Defining “Need” Is Far More Complicated than Assumed.

I’m convinced that this is one reason so many well-intended programs don’t work. Needs are often an interrelated collection of problems, not just a single variable. It’s also easier to focus on overt symptoms rather than the underlying causes, and we tend to invest *most* resources to measure results that may have the least *real* significance. Take, for example, a “reading problem” facing a central city youth. Start

with how the school system works: Can the teacher and administrator reach the student? Is the curriculum relevant to the child’s background and interests? What about the home environment—is there at least one interested parent or guardian present to help with studying? Is there space to do homework? Is there nutritious food and attention to health? Or look at the economic system: Must the

child work to help support the family? Is there money for books and reading matter, not to mention clothes? Or the political system: Does the family accept the legitimacy of the school authority? In other words, giving the child a real chance takes more than



One of the early construction projects in Sardinia, Italy, 1957.



Hundreds of Italians often had only one meal a day, provided at Casa Mia in Naples, 1951.

analysis of reading test scores.

2. Dealing with Racism Requires Personal Immersion. As I moved around in the inner city and its largely black population, I quickly recognized the gap between the people I was working closely with and the many other folks I dealt with in the larger environs of Milwaukee and the state. I developed respect and admiration for the energy, resourcefulness, and effectiveness of Reuben and my other minority colleagues on our

university staff. I was amazed as I viewed the results of the 200 block leaders in the Ombudsman Project. On each block, folks volunteered their time, participating in training to become mediators/facilitators between their neighbors and authorities in the larger political system—whether it was contacting services in the bureaucracy or getting garbage picked up. When I met the teachers we worked with, I became aware of their sensitivity and desire to serve their

community. Yet when I talked with employers in the corporate world, or officials in the maze of agencies, or with some school administrators and many folks in the larger (white) public, there was often a jaundiced perception of the black population. Since no one, of course, would admit to racism, this was a bias conveyed in many subtle or bureaucratic ways. However, the people I ran into who actually knew Reuben and many others I could mention felt as I did: that

by far the surest and best strategy was through both races working shoulder-to-shoulder to counter one of our most fundamentally intractable cultural issues.

III. Findhorn and High Wind

While I was still deeply involved with inner city issues, in October 1976, my wife Lisa visited the legendary Findhorn community in Scotland. This may have been its spiritual heyday, with people attracted from around the globe. The some 200 residents were not only designing a model of “the good life”; they were trying to live it every day.

Lisa brought back bundles of notes from talks presented there, including those of David Spangler, a mystic and teacher who, early on, articulated the vision of Findhorn as a seed point for a coming “New Age.” He said there would be a “fundamental change of

consciousness from one of isolation and separation to one of communion and wholeness, to build a future different from what we already know or expect.”

After more than 20 years of marriage, I’d never seen Lisa so fired up. She obviously didn’t want to be dragged back from the heights of the New Age into Wisconsin’s mainstream culture.

I arranged for her to report on Findhorn at a big conference in

Chicago. The room we’d signed up for 15 people had 400 folks waiting expectantly for her presentation. I’d invited my dean to the conclave and he was fascinated to see, in a period of declining enrollments, this astonishing public interest. He urged me to organize similar education events on our campus. We invited the Findhorn cofounders to speak at the university’s largest space. Twelve hundred people showed up

from all walks of life—folks I had not imagined would be interested.

In 1978 I figured it was time for me to visit Scotland, and I did become convinced of the significance of this model for rethinking the future of our culture—both from a philosophical standpoint

and also considering the looming, worldwide crisis of natural resource depletion. Over the next years I got approvals from university officials to line up

a series of seminars that drew not only traditional students and academics, but people from across Wisconsin.

Some 50 people, of all backgrounds and ages, attended virtually every class we offered, and bonded as a group. Many of them traveled to Findhorn on study trips we organized. At a certain point, there was a small rebellion: “We love these classes, but now it’s time to stop talking and *do* something that will be a practical, real-world demonstration.” This led to the creation of High Wind, an intentional ecological community on rural land 50 miles north of Milwaukee.

Since the High Wind story has been written about in this magazine (most recently, in “High Wind: A Retrospective,” issue #145), and detailed in several books, I’ll simply focus on a few of my own observations.

With a full-time university job, I often valued my periodic dis-



Belden Paulson with Reube Harpole, a colleague in inner city development in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

While residential communities, important as they are, will remain limited in number, the expansion of consciousness is unlimited.

tance from the details of community life and relationships because I could weigh what was happening at High Wind against my larger world. When the community was cohesive and members felt clear and excited about creating an alternative model, this truly pointed up the dysfunctional culture I experienced in the mainstream. But also, relationships sometimes soured, and now and then members would leave, disgruntled. At times, meetings were endlessly unproductive because our consensus process paralyzed decision-making.

Most members were working their hearts out—with little monetary compensation. We held regular “community building” meetings and internal conferences where everyone was encouraged to express needs and wishes and gripes. Sometimes when feelings ran high over an ongoing dilemma, we brought in an outside resource person.

When I didn't get upset if things weren't working out, or when the interpersonal “stuff” boiled up, I was criticized for being “insensitive.” My own postwar overseas experience, when I was dealing daily with people in dire life and death situations, forced me to develop a thick skin—not always advantageous in intentional communities!

One of High Wind's impacts had to do with education. We sponsored courses and major conferences, often with the university. Our Three-Community Seminars brought a small group to live for a month each at High Wind, Findhorn, and a third community. People from all over descended on High Wind for tours and workshops. We contracted the public schools for inner city kids to spend time at the community. On the national level, we cooperated with various groups to begin designing a holistic think tank to recast national policy. The common underlying element was to rethink our culture, pushing for a change in consciousness, which in turn could begin transforming institutions to build a sustainable world.

Among the significant insights of these years with High Wind, I cite two:

1. Ordinary People with an Extraordinary Mission. What

made us think we had something to offer about birthing cultural change? How could we stand up to the sometimes hostile status quo environment? How could we—ordinary, flawed human beings, often disagreeing as to how to proceed, and also finding it difficult to fit our diverse personalities into close living quarters—possibly offer a credible alternative to the larger world? I, for one, sensed that there must be mysterious forces at work—the unexplainable insights that popped out from some depth within us, faith that defied logic, belief in the potential of ourselves and others beyond all reason, the impulse to drop everything else to serve—all these I'd call spirit. Some call this “Factor X,” that added intangible dimension that makes things work. And ultimately we did achieve successes, and the number of those attracted to what we represented multiplied.

2. Alternative Community Redefined.

A few years ago the High Wind board conducted a survey of some 200 people who had had close contact with High Wind. In analyzing results, the board was impressed with the significant impact on many lives. I learned from my years at High Wind and from all the folks associated with us—residents, event participants, outside supporters—that we needed to redefine the meaning of “community.” My concept now is that it might be a place, a residential enclave, but it also represents a paradigm or set of values delineating how one sees the world and the commitments one is prepared to make.

This dramatically opens up the potential for historic change because while residential communities, important as they are, will remain limited in number, the expansion of consciousness is unlimited. 🌱



Bel and Lisa and their solar home at High Wind.



From left to right: Bel Paulson, Lisa Paulson, Bob Pavlik, David Lagerman, Barbara Prendergast, Maureen Gallagher.

*After graduating from Oberlin College in the early 1950s, Belden Paulson created innovative projects overseas, was a faculty member at the University of Wisconsin for 35 years, and with his wife Lisa, cofounded the High Wind Community near Plymouth, Wisconsin. His varied adventures are detailed in *Odyssey of a Practical Visionary*, and in *Notes from the Field: Strategies toward Cultural Transformation*. He and Lisa still live in their solar home in the now “relaxed” eco-neighborhood.*

Getting to Community and Life *after* Community: COLLECTIVISM VS. INDIVIDUALITY

By Lisa Paulson

Here is how I got to community, was in it deeply for over a dozen years, how I came out the other side—and what happened then.

My perspective on the community idea is a long one—roughly spanning the last 40 years. But before that I'd lived in Italy in the 1950s, joining an inspiring humanitarian project started by my future husband, Bel Paulson, to help sort out an appalling postwar scene of starvation and homelessness. I'd served as logistical backup for his surprisingly successful refugee resettlement experiment on the island of Sardinia. And I'd done the same in the dustbowl of northeast Brazil where he was researching village dynamics. But these were specific assignments, focused around dire political, social, or economic crises, and I zeroed in mainly on my particular supportive role within that larger context.

I came of age in an era when women married young and took it for granted that any career based on personal creative expression was sublimated to caring for a husband and children. I got that—for about 10 years after we'd settled in Wisconsin. But then came the national ferment of the 1960s, and I began to seriously question this role. I left the housewife job to help run a school teaching altered states of consciousness.

Findhorn: Introduction to Community

Then, in 1976, while organizing conferences around consciousness and paranormal research, I happened on the mesmerizing legends coming out of Findhorn, the renowned spiritual community in a remote corner of Scotland—tales of people so attuned to enigmatic forces in their gardens that they began growing improbably large vegetables. I determined that I had to go and see for myself.

By some miracle I managed a solo voyage to Findhorn. There, a dream—a mission—began to take shape as I plunged into the vibrant life of this utopian enclave, whose primary purpose was to redress the balance between people and nature.

At the end of my stay, I was seemingly pushed by some mysterious cheerleader to take the Findhorn ideas from the blustery North Sea and sand dunes home to Wisconsin. These were imperatives to live in connection, in community, in mutual compassion with each other, and with all life they touched.

It was a message coming at exactly the right time in our part of the world. The passion that had been ignited for me in Scotland turned out to be contagious. People flocked to my talks from across several Midwest states. They were hungry to hear about alternatives to tired belief systems. They wanted to learn about new, different ways to think, organize their own lives and society, and to plan constructively, not only for the survival of human civilization, but for the very survival of the earth. Remember that this was a couple of decades before “sustainability” became a familiar buzzword. I think



*Circle dance in the
High Wind farmyard.*

Tim Conner

everyone was astonished at how quickly and deeply the ideas caught on.

I did manage to stick with my initially skeptical family while, at the unlikely age of 50 (with the help of an escalating number of enthusiasts) I started to implement some of those far-out imperatives. Eventually I was able to draw in my husband to be my lifelong, essential partner in creating our own intentional community.

And so it was that for the next 20 very earnest, alternately frenzied and epiphany-like years with my fellow pioneers, we put everything aside “for the good of the whole.” Our purpose was to implement the grounding and outworking of the venture we called High Wind—blending the spiritual vision of Findhorn with the ecological goals and experiments of the New Alchemy Institute in Massachusetts.

Here is our High Wind credo that laid out a comprehensive approach to living together sustainably and designing education around these concepts:

*To walk gently on the Earth;
To know the spirit within;
To hear our fellow beings;
To invoke the light of wisdom;
And to build the future now*

Epiphanies as Well as Power Issues Surfaced in the Community

My Findhorn experience reflects what I think often happens in mid-life—when one’s ideas and maturity are peaking, as well as energy and flexibility, and an inner sense of personal power, savvy, and confidence takes hold.

High Wind attracted mostly folks a generation younger than Bel and me. As we discovered, especially in situations where community founders are older than their recruits (and perhaps more financially viable), a dynamic develops where the founders find themselves the “parents” and the other members the “children.” And, as in mainstream families, there’s a natural tendency for the kids to test their muscle against those they perceive as authority figures, and to rebel. Bel and I frequently saw our ideas and proposals challenged, especially when people arrived and discovered that the fixed ideas about community life they had brought were not the reality at all. Despite our insistence that we all held equal authority and made decisions by consensus, fingers were predictably pointed at Bel and me as the “power” figures. Members thought that if we didn’t like an initiative they put forward, it had little chance of materializing.

As the self-appointed “vision-holder,” I especially found myself to be the prod to remind others of the particular lofty purposes and standards that had been articulated initially—the ideas that had excited and attracted everyone. My problem was that because I cared so deeply about this fragile organization I saw as my “child,” I suffered when I saw it tilting away toward another track (as to a closed homesteading model instead of reaching out—“serving the world”—through education and demonstration). Often, our very lengthy, sometimes heated meetings ended with me limping away, fully inhabiting my thin skin, doubting myself and distrusting those who had joined High Wind. I wondered what had happened to erode such a compelling, important goal. Over and over I was knocked down just because I was in a position to be perceived as a leader—exactly what I didn’t want. A pretty big comedown from my Pied Piper image upon returning from Findhorn!

Of course the community was right. Bel and I *did* embody a certain power. We were the founders, High Wind was our idea, and it began on property we had owned. We had an income because Bel continued to teach at the university, not an easy juggling act. Our recruits had abandoned paying jobs and rushed to give their hearts and energy to an ideal as volunteers. They found, though, that High Wind had no money to



Seminar attendees learn the intricacies of our organic vegetable garden.



Women at High Wind sometimes take on the heaviest work.



Visitors tour the two small High Wind Styrofoam domes.



Indian drumming at the sacred fire circle.

Photos courtesy of Lisa Paulson

Staff meeting during High Wind/Lorian summer seminar.



Sunday morning discussion group in the bioshelter greenhouse.



support them, and they had to scramble to provide their own sustenance.

In intentional community, where egalitarianism is a central tenet, such a collection of factors might have been a pretty deadly deterrent at the starting gate. Bel and I didn't always succeed in diminishing some people's unease around this reality, but we found that after members left, those who had often struggled and grumbled the most about money issues, about fitting in, or realizing their goals, came back to tell us that High Wind had been a pivotal growth experience. Being here had set a compass direction for the rest of their lives.

Besides the issue of who held the power, and a subtle hierarchy of haves and have-nots, there was also the fact that High Wind was unfolding in a larger community considerably more conservative than we were. With a flock of young singles, we didn't fit into the traditional rural family structure surrounding us. When I encountered a couple of young hunters on a walk in the nearby woods, they lit up when I told them where I lived: "Where do you keep your animals for sacrifice?" they wanted to know. Or when Don collected a pile of scrap wood after building his house and invited the rest of us to come to his bonfire to lift a few celebratory beers, the rumor went out the next day that we were dancing around a ritual fire in black robes reciting Satanic incantations. Much more fun to believe juicy gossip than to realize we were hardworking, boringly straight, ordinary mortals! But this, of course, pinpointed a major flaw in our calculations: we hadn't done the essential political spade-work of getting to know our neighbors better, blending in, allaying unnecessary fears about alien influences. We relied for support on the hundreds (thousands over the years) who flocked from Milwaukee and from across the country who were already believers. It was a lot harder to convince those unacquainted with our perspectives.

Gifts of Community

We should have realized that introducing values and practices that ran counter to those of the dominant culture was going to be a hard sell. Such is the lot of pioneers. High Wind certainly felt the brunt of this divide, but on the other hand every one of us grew stronger and took away a huge array of new skills. We got to wear a lot of hats.

My personal takeaways: how to dig



French intensive raised planting beds, nail up sheetrock or a roof, split wood, construct a wigwam, cook for groups, lead tours, talk about solar buildings, put out a newsletter, and handle outreach and fundraising. At High Wind workshops, I became familiar with everything from Permaculture design and indigenous healing methods to weighing the wisdom of the Perennial philosophy. Probably the most valuable lifelong skill was learning to negotiate the emotional shoals of living with other people. And, as well, we would always carry with us the ideals and aims projected by the wider communities movement.

The Tyranny of Ideals

However, when you have some 20 people doing *everything* together for months or years on end, everyday life and relationships can get to be challenging. When our folks, who'd been fiercely motivated to install their own images of what the ideal community *should* be like, started to experience what our community *was*, some pretty intense dynamics were bound to surface. Emotions became fragile, and we began to realize that, ironically, the most precious (and scarce) commodities, and what we longed for, were more privacy and the right to indulge in personal pursuits—the antithesis of community?

At a certain point, all of us at High Wind saw that our personal zeal for the cause was being eroded by creeping burnout. Besides our regular jobs in construction, the vegetable and flower gardens, the grounds, kitchen, and office, we were servicing increasing numbers of visitors and participants in many educational programs. We decided to step back, take a deep breath, and reassess.

For a dozen years we'd been living and working in lockstep, aspiring to what we believed was the highest and purest of what a community could be. Then some of us (certainly I was one) began to realize how badly we were also craving an independence from what had come to be the tyranny of our ideals.

In the early 1990s there was a momentous, unanimous decision to let go of our intentional community image. Opting to relax our dogged earnestness (which sometimes had threatened or puzzled townspeople), we agreed to become a considerably looser “ecological neighborhood.” To our surprise, those of us who remained found that we actually related better and took more pleasure in caring for each other and organizing group events than when such togetherness was obligatory. Eureka moments!

Togetherness or Individualism: Is That the Question?

In the founding of the United States, freedom and independence were mandated. Indi-

viduality was prized and protected. It's irrefutably in our bones, in our DNA as citizens and as a country. It's been our history from the beginning, unlike much of the rest of the world with its kingdoms and fiefdoms—rulers and serfs. It's what compels us to struggle to shine as autonomous beings.

There's the wisdom now that we *do* need to function with far greater consensus and community—to see ourselves as citizens of the earth where every being/life form has rights and must be protected. Where cooperation for mutual survival of all species is more imperative as threats of extinction loom. Yet within that realization there also

When some 20 people do everything together for years on end, everyday life and relationships can get to be challenging.

needs to be acknowledgment of the birth-right of individualism that requires freedom to break free, to express, create, and develop without guilt.

In retrospect, High Wind can feel that it has influenced and inspired legions of supporters, regionally and nationally, and ultimately has made a bit of a positive dent in our surrounding area. Those of us who remained in the eco-neighborhood, as well as the residents who left, were indeed changed. Those going back into “the world” usually sought new paths with more meaning and significance to fit their talents and personal proclivities than they would have if they'd never risked dipping their toes into community.

For me, there were mixed emotions. I felt an enormous sense of satisfaction at what we'd collectively pulled off and the legacy now in place. It also came as a blessed relief to step off the merry-go-round of togetherness and responsibility. I felt as though I'd been on a treadmill 24/7, trying to move the world—my smallish world at least—into a better, saner place.

After Community

With this weight lifted, in the next years I stepped back to reflect and revisit what had been a lifelong touchstone—Nature. I've always had a connection to the magic of land or place, and have felt compulsively driven to create visual images and words



to describe all this. I caught the spirit embodied in meadows, forests, mountains, streams—whole communities of elements conspiring to capture human sensibility, if only we'd pay attention. Post-community, I resumed the delicious, solitary exploration of wild places, much as I had long ago.

In 2008, definitely an elder, I began to write and publish the first of four books that unpacked some of my most vividly remembered experiences of the last eight decades—experiences that shaped what I ultimately believed in and became. I've written of our concerted attempts at social change, as well as remembering and recording personal adventures throughout the past 70-odd years.

Here in our High Wind neighborhood I can initiate leisurely interactions with my near neighbors. (As I write this, I'm about to amble next door for a potluck house concert that will involve not only our former community members, but also friends from the area.)

I look forward now to several months a year living out-of-state where I become simply one more villager, seen around town with my easel and paintbrushes (that I resurrected after 40 years). I don't carry a label (positive or negative) that screams "radical" or "revolutionary" or "ideologue."



Ethnobotany field walk during summer seminar.

dividual projects with a community of just two?

I may have moved beyond intentional community, but it's still my tribe. Of all my adventures, creating community was undoubtedly the most meaningful. It was my central life mission. I'm still *of* it, but not *in* it. Some of my close friends remain with me on the still-active High Wind board that now gives grants to regional groups for sustainability initiatives. (Check the other articles by some of these extraordinary board members in this issue.) And I love sharing our experiences with groups and individuals who seek us out at the threshold of starting or joining their own communities: I talk about the satisfactions, opportunities, pitfalls, and our painful learning curves. People also come to inspect the environmentally sensitive home we designed in 1986—a design now superseded by more efficient technologies, but which can still keep us toasty without backup heat when it's zero out and the sun is shining.

At this stage I can relax and accept the opposing pulls of dual forces within myself: a messianic call to promote community and a lifestyle imperative for the continuance of civilization—and also the absolute need to be alone, quiet, independent. I know that both are possible and that I can open doors at will to either. I've finally learned that

Of all my adventures, creating community was undoubtedly the most meaningful.

My circle of friends can include those who may oppose my political, spiritual, or societal views, but these differences might not even come up. I can step through now permeable barriers, which is really freeing. It's trickier in my area of Wisconsin (though for the past dozen years I've been getting together regularly with a diverse, thoughtful, often wonderfully outrageous bunch of women from neighboring towns).

Together and Solitude, Action and Reflection

I think how one approaches this dichotomy depends on what stage in the arc of life one is. How is it that I could relinquish the most important and fulfilling happening in my life, shared with a group I loved, and trade it in for a life filled with silences and very in-

moments snatched for deliberate loafing and ruminating are not only possible but essential. We don't always have to keep running to catch up with the Red Queen.

Note: I've touched only briefly on some of the dynamics of our community experience (focusing more on the challenges instead of on the times that were absolutely glorious and rewarding—which were many). Some readers may recall that several of our thorny problems were aired in much earlier issues of COMMUNITIES. Both the difficulties and the very positive impact or significance of the community are spelled out exhaustively in my 2010 book: *An Unconventional Journey: The Story of High Wind, From Vision to Community to Eco-Neighborhood* (available through the FIC Bookshelf). Information about the other books both Bel and I have written can be found on our Thistlefield Books website (thistlefieldbooks.com). 🐦

Writer and artist Lisa Paulson met her husband, Belden, in the slums of Naples while backpacking through Europe. She joined him to help alleviate the dire conditions among homeless Neapolitans living in ruins following World War II devastation—and also to provide relief for Iron Curtain escapees interned in refugee camps there. After work in Sardinia and Rome, they settled in Wisconsin. Then, inspired by her trip to the Findhorn community in 1976, she and Bel cofounded the High Wind community north of Milwaukee.



Three-community seminar creates a dawn ritual at High Wind.

The Three-Community Seminar

Introductory Note by Belden Paulson

Elizabeth Matson, a creative young writer from Canada, participated in the Three-Community Seminar in 1984. Middle-aged Barbara Prendergast first signed up as a “student,” and then shepherded two later seminars as their leader.

We offered this program five times through the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, co-sponsored with our High Wind community. At first the university was reluctant to give credit. What’s living a month at High Wind, a second month at the Sirius community in Massachusetts or the Eourres community in the French Alps, and a third month at Findhorn in Scotland got to do with academic learning? What’s working along with the residents in those

intentional communities, while at the same time creating their own smaller community with a dozen fellow compatriots drawn from around the country, got to do with regular classroom learning?

Elizabeth describes her transformative journey that still continues. In her poem, Barbara highlights (obliquely and cryptically, so as not to embarrass the participants) the often outrageous or wildly humorous episodes of people learning to live together—respecting and resolving conflicts—all within the rich context of the host communities.

The evaluations were so overwhelmingly positive that the university encouraged subsequent seminars, including this living/learning format.

THE UNEXPECTED JOURNEY

By Elizabeth Matson



Elizabeth at Findhorn.



Elizabeth at Sirius.

Once upon a time, long ago and far away, like maybe 30 years ago, when I was in my 20s, I went on an Unexpected Journey.

I had just dropped out of a graduate social work program and written a children's book. I dreamed of a different sort of life, one filled with art-making and community. But, in fact, I was very alone and had no idea what I was going to do with my life. Somewhere I read about this Three-Month Living/Learning Seminar in Alternative Communities, offered for graduate credit through the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Participants would live one month each in three different intentional communities, High Wind in Wisconsin, Sirius in Massachusetts, and—the only community I'd heard of, the Shangri-la of alternative communities—Findhorn in Scotland. I signed up.

Then I moved back home since my lease had run out and I was no longer going to school. Squeezed back into the family home, my dreams contracted as well. It was hard to imagine being able to just go off to live in community for three months and imagine a better world. It seemed unrealistic somehow. And it occurred to me that I would have to tell my parents. I canceled my registration.

And Belden Paulson called me. The professor behind this three-month seminar and founder of High Wind Community with his wife, Lisa, called to persuade me to give the seminar a chance. Like

a herald, his call sounded a clarion, reawakening my dreams and desires to build a bright new world. I told my parents about this seminar I had signed up for. To my great surprise they offered no objections. I emphasized the green building and organic gardening. The fact that the seminar offered graduate course credits probably didn't hurt either.

I arrived at High Wind with 12 other seekers. I was not the only one who had temporarily backed out at the last minute. We came together as a group of explorers, reveling in morning talks with David Spangler and others, working on community projects in the gardens, kitchen, and bioshelter in the afternoons, creating rituals and art-making. We explored community through labor, art, and

As we explored labor, art, and spirituality within each intentional community, we became a community ourselves.

spirituality within an intentional community but, more than that, we became a community. The 13 of us became our own traveling community.

I wrote a story within a story, a mythological representation of our coming together as a community. Borrowing from a recent *Star Trek* movie with only slight adaptation, just because I liked the sound of it, I named the 13 of us together the Koboshi Maru and each of us separately the Warrior, the Prophet, the Seer, the Shepherdess, the Scholar, the Healer, the Harpist, the Mystic, the Bard, the Jester, the Builder, the Sage, and the Spinner. Our last night at High Wind, I read aloud the tale and found my voice as the Spinner of Tales.

I continued the story as we traveled to Sirius, reading the latest installment aloud before we headed to Findhorn, but I never finished it. This unintentional intentional community we had become, the Koboshi Maru, gave me my most direct lessons in community. As we left High Wind to join Sirius and then Findhorn, we were now something more than just a random gathering of individuals. We were a community trying to fit inside another community. Our boundaries clashed, contracted, and expanded. The shifting dynamics of community,

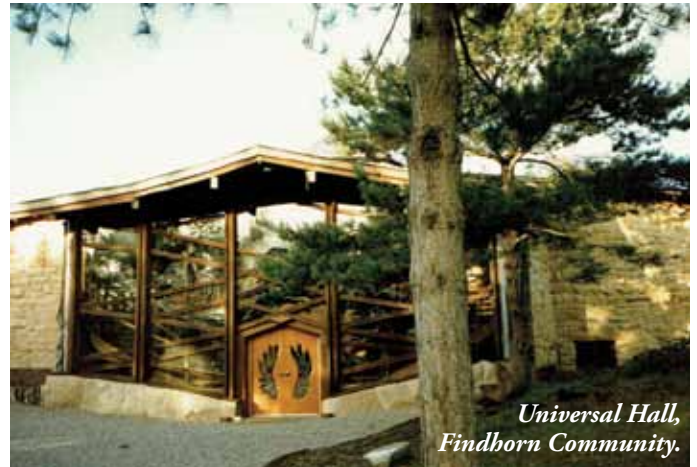
the difficulties of consensus, the challenges of personalities, changing allegiances, and individuals leaving and joining were all experienced personally, not theoretically or by objective observation.

We experienced the challenges of community directly and personally, not theoretically or by objective observation.

I had no final installment to read before we left Findhorn. Instead, I badly sprained my ankle trying to return a bag of treasured rocks to

the beach. This was my sign to stay, a nomadic wanderer, three more months in Great Britain in order to return to Findhorn for a three-week Sacred Dance Workshop, another dream I had

High Wind kitchen.



*Universal Hall,
Findhorn Community.*



Tribe of Thirteen.

Photos courtesy of Elizabeth Matson

thought impossible until I did it. For many years, the story hung over my head in its incompleteness. Maybe because I knew how it went. The Koboshi Maru, the 13 who were no longer 13, scaled the Glass Mountain, found the treasure and variously weighed themselves down with it or gave it back to the beach, and then returned home, going their separate ways. It was a tale of There and Back Again.

It was over.

Except it wasn't.

The Three-Month Seminar remains a touchstone experience in my life. I often feel I have not lived up to its expectations. I have not lived the life I dreamed of living. I have not changed the world. I have not created an artists' community or even created a living as an artist. I am not the writer I had hoped to be (though I have not entirely given up hope either). I could go on but do we ever entirely live up to our youthful dreams and expectations?

Life takes us on a journey and it is rarely the journey we had expected or planned. My three-month travels into and part of intentional communities gave me the tools to make sense of the journey. To know when it is time to enter the darkness and wait for the seed to germinate; when to nourish the seedling; when to relish the beauty of full bloom; when to harvest, give thanks, and let go.

When I remember the lessons rather than the dreams of community, I know I am who I am because I once was and always will be one small pearl on the string of the ever-expanding Koboshi Maru. I am a storyteller because of the three-month seminar. I found my voice as a shaper and teller of tales at High Wind. I moved to Wisconsin because of the ties I formed to the land and people there. And I have traveled from there to live and work in various other parts of the country because I learned it was possible to make community wherever I went. I may have never lived in intentional communities beyond those long-term visits but I have carried the desire to create community with me. The pull of community has led me to facilitating a neighborhood Eco-Team; to becoming a folklorist, a librarian, a yoga teacher; to starting story circles and dream groups; to choosing to travel by foot and public transportation when I can; to meeting my neighbors as I walk the dog; to finding myself ahead of the curve when it comes to organic produce, green living, sustainable economy.

It is the small things from this Unexpected Journey that have shaped my life. Motherpeace and Angel cards. The Game of Life. Art-making as a process rather than a product. Ritual. The power of imagination. The friendships and connections. Rutabagas. Listening for that small still voice within. But those small things add up. They become part of the daily choices that I make. Bilbo may have used his ring only to make magical appearances and disappearances from Shire gatherings after he came home from his Unexpected Journey but he was changed, nonetheless, in a deeply profound way. When you go There and Back Again, you never come back the same, even if the life you slip back into is a profoundly small and ordinary one. Once upon a time, I went on an Unexpected Journey. Though I left and came back home again a long time ago, the Journey itself has never ended. 🌸

Elizabeth Matson participated in the three-month Living/Learning Seminar in 1984. She is a storyteller, writer, and yoga teacher, currently making her living as a youth/teen librarian in Arizona.

Community

By Barbara B. Prendergast

we bonded at High Wind
settled at Findhorn
on the North Sea
our little community
within a larger one
then to an island
off an island
off an island
among the caretakers of Erraid
an isle in the Inner Hebrides
later we journeyed to Eourres
a community
become a village
in the French alps

we loved and lost
broke promises
forgave ourselves
walked the woods
with a friend
we did not know
listened to lies
kept the secret
pretended not to
notice nakedness

slammed cows in the dark
on the way to the loo
plied our tormenters
who made us work
with *American* whiskey
shoveled manure
planted the gardens

work is love in action

we played 'The Game'
transformed a bit
drank tea and meditated
repaired their windows
fed their cows
gathered mussels
made noodles
drank their beer
sang their songs
danced our hellos
danced our goodbyes

work is love in action

French mud between our toes
French ants in our beds
off to work we go
through the mountains
to plant squash plants
just before the freeze

lost one another
found one another

refused help
gave thanks for help
fell off the path
sank in the mud of Iona
looking for fairies

*if what you are doing
doesn't work don't
keep doing it*

we left our rings
and our tears
in a cloister walk
sacrificed ourselves and others
felt bad kissed and made up
left others out
got left out

*if what you are doing
doesn't work don't
keep doing it*

we held hands
promised to be faithful
lost our tickets
lost ourselves
gave the ancient
dying trees water
from a sacred well
healed each other
healed ourselves
with chocolate
and lavender

we ate nettle soup
and flowers on cake
under the Bougainvillea
learned French
from the cook
stirred the pots
washed the dishes
chanted ancient songs
in ancient places
painted walls
rebuilt houses
herded goats
who slimed us
if we sat down to rest
we made cheese
and lay in the sun

work is love in action

we came home changed
and started again

thank you

so glad you noticed 🌸

Barbara B. Prendergast is a long-time member of the board of High Wind. She participated in and led the Three-Community Seminar which often transformed the lives of those who attended. She is a workshop presenter and a trained guide for The Game of Transformation. Barbara lives in Milwaukee with her husband Thomas.

GIFTS, SKILLS, AND PASSIONS: A Community Organizer Looks at Community

By Janice Christensen

“Tell me about your gifts.” The questioner is a slender man with tattoos and a clipboard. The woman with the white dreadlocks perches on her folding chair in the old dance hall. Gifts—qualities we are born with—are different from skills—abilities we have cultivated. The woman purses her lips, thinking.

“I’ve always been very healthy,” she says tentatively. “And I have an excellent sense of smell!”

The old dance hall is filled with pairs of people, interviewing each other about their gifts, skills, and passions. After they have finished, they will introduce each other to the group, using the information they have gathered.

Standing at one end of the dance hall with a stopwatch and a bell is a woman whose gifts include a ready grin and a loud voice which she knows how to use—technically a skill.

That would be me. I spent over a decade between 2001 and 2014 as a community organizer in the Milwaukee neighborhood of Riverwest—a delicious jumble of artists, musicians, students, working class poor, activists, anarchists, and hipsters. How I got there and what I learned on the way is a pilgrim’s progress through the New Age and communities movements of the 1980s onward. This article chronicles that journey, identifying lessons learned on the way.

Mad Men

In the 1970s and early 1980s I was a copywriter in various advertising agencies in Wisconsin. If you watched the AMC television series, “Mad Men,” you’ll know what I mean when I say I worked for older versions of Don Draper and Roger Sterling. I was a post-feminist Peggy Olson.

My ambition in life was to be a writer, and I thought this was a good way to transform that skill into a living. What I didn’t understand at the time was the spiritual cost involved. After years of writing for big corporations, fast food, financial institutions, and pharmaceuticals, there were abrasions on my soul.

Lesson: Choices Matter

“If you don’t do it, somebody else will,” my mentors told me and I told myself. But one day a new voice said, “If you don’t do it, YOU won’t be the one who does it.” I quickly found

myself without a job.

How did I learn about High Wind Community? It’s hard to remember those days before the internet. Somehow I stumbled into a New Age seminar and encountered Lisa Paulson, who was giving a talk about an intentional community near Plymouth, about an hour north of Milwaukee. I followed up, visited, and soon applied to become a resident. That’s how I found myself sitting in the sacred circle on the highest hill on the High Wind property, on the day of the Harmonic Convergence in August 1987 (everyone who remembers that, say, “Om...”).

Down below, in the Farmhouse, the High Wind Board of Directors was meeting, and would decide whether my six-year-old daughter and I could move to the community. They decided, and by September we were settled into the rooms above the greenhouse in the Bioshelter.

The “Technicolor Amish”

I worked for a while designing ads for the local newspaper, the *Plymouth Review*. The publisher, another Milwaukee refugee, referred to the folks at High Wind as the “technicolor Amish.” We were a secular community, dedicated to exploring alternative governance styles (we used modified consensus process) and sustainable living (we used technologies like passive solar and superinsulation). My service to the community was to design and lay out brochures, and to use my desktop publishing skills and my early model Macintosh computer to publish the quarterly newsletter, *Windwatch*.

Eventually I started a small business, my attempt at an “ethical advertising agency.” I had some good clients, and made a little money. I bought a piece of land from the community and built a geodesic dome house. I had a 20-mile view from my front porch, and could glimpse a tiny piece of Lake Michigan on the horizon. Down the hill was Springdale Farm, one of the first Community Supported Agriculture projects in the state. It was a wonderful life.

Lesson: Things Can Be Too Perfect

I became restless.



I cherished a secret ambition to be a minister. My daughter and I had been attending Unitarian Church North in Mequon, Wisconsin for some years, after a rather disturbing family conversation:

DAUGHTER: “Mom, everybody else in my school seems to know who this Jesus guy is, but I don’t have a clue.”

HELPFUL FRIEND TO DAUGHTER: “Let me tell ya, kid. Two thousand years ago you couldn’t swing a dead rat in Palestine without hitting a Messiah...”

ME TO DAUGHTER: “Time for us to get you into Sunday School!”

One Sunday I confessed my ministerial ambitions to the new minister at my church. Later that afternoon the phone rang. It was Rev. James Ishmael Ford.

JAMES: “I was thinking about what you said this morning. Now, Unitarians don’t believe that we rack up points in heaven for things like this, but I wanted to encourage you to pursue the ministry if you’re serious about it. I think you’ve got what it takes.”

ME: “Is this how Unitarians get ‘the call’?”

JAMES: “Yes. Yes, it is.”

So I considered it. James helped me become a Chaplain. I served on committees, preached a couple of sermons, and performed weddings. I learned I loved the pulpit. I did considerable soul searching and made visits to Unitarian theological seminaries in Chicago and Boston.

And I decided to sell everything I owned—car, house, business—and go back to school.

Adventures ensued, but I managed to graduate from Harvard Divinity School in 1996. I had a burning desire to serve, not as a traditional parish minister, but as a community minister, although I didn’t have much idea what that would entail.

Missionary to the Anarchists

My path after Harvard led me back to intentional communities. I loved the idea of Temporary Autonomous Zones (see Reading List below). After graduating I spent a summer at Dreamtime Village, a community in the Driftless Area of western Wisconsin. The young people I met there, to whom I had thought to minister, taught me so many things. I learned that communities can be amorphous and flexible while still serving important purposes. People can come together, think new thoughts, then disband. And just from that, the world changes—if ever so slightly.

Lesson: If You Seek to Teach, You Will Be Taught

An important lesson came during a visit

to Dreamtime by Dr. Patch Adams, founder of Gesundheit Institute, a radical healthcare organization in West Virginia. It was during a two-week workshop offered by the School for Designing a Society out of Urbana, Illinois. The topic of the day was leadership in communities.

Dr. Adams was dressed in his usual costume, which he described as “clothing capable of being transformed into clown clothes,” silk pants and shirt, long grey ponytail, a dangling dinner fork suspended from an earring. Nevertheless, he commanded the respect of the young people in the living room.

“When I look for the leaders in a community,” he said, “I look for the person cleaning the kitchen. I look for the person who can find the fuse box.”

I listened from my station at the kitchen sink, working away at the pile of breakfast dishes. “Hmm,” I thought. I wasn’t the leader of a community. Was I?

A Healing Community

We would soon find out. The next adventure took me, later that year, to an old stage coach inn halfway between Milwaukee and Green Bay at a crossroads in the Wisconsin countryside called Rhine Center. My partner, Dr. David Schemberger, had purchased the building and grounds. He and I started a healing community called Rhine Center Village.

We moved in, along with David’s mother Irene and a small group of young friends. Together we began to prepare garden beds and create a model of healthy nutrition for Irene, who was recovering from a broken hip, and for the many young people who came to us for varying lengths of time to participate in a curriculum of life skills.

Lesson: Hairy Potatoes

We spent two years there. Once again, there were lessons. There was the lesson I had first heard from Roshi Joan Halifax, related to a group of students at Harvard. She told the story of her visit to Plum Village, Thich Nhat Hanh’s community in southwest France.

She was working under the direction of a cook who spoke no English, and given a basket of vegetables she did not recognize—she said they looked like “hairy potatoes, caked in mud.” She took a knife and began laboriously scraping the mud from the roots.

The cook checked her progress, and laughed. She took the basket away from Joan, put a cover on it and shook it vigorously. When she removed the cover, all the vegetables were cleaned of mud from bouncing against each other.

Roshi Halifax explained that this was the difference between solitary therapy, where one gains awareness painstakingly, one little breakthrough at a time, and community life, where members bounce against each other, shedding their impediments cleanly and quickly, if perhaps more painfully.



Photos courtesy of Janice Christensen

So at Rhine Center Village we bounced against each other, learning how to be better human beings. We learned to be in service to an idea higher than ourselves, and to serve the unspoken needs of an older person for whom we were caring.

Lesson: The Function of Faith

The second big lesson was this: We cannot know the outcome of our actions.

During our time at Rhine Center Village we touched so many young lives. Many learned the effects of high quality nutrition, hard work, and commitment; healing themselves of addictions and depression. We saw so many tiny changes which would lead to vastly different outcomes later in life.

All we could do was trust our better natures and hope for the best.

Lesson: If You Seek to Heal, You Will be Healed

One day during my time at Rhine Center, I received a large, mysterious manila envelope in the mail. Inside it was a smaller envelope, then another and another, each with a previous address reaching back over a couple of years.

Inside the last envelope was a letter from a private investigator that said someone was trying to reach me. I called the phone number, but realized I was unable to speak, because I couldn't catch my breath.

This was the contact I had been waiting for since 1970 when, as a scared and heartbroken 18-year-old, I had given up my beautiful baby daughter for adoption. It had been a weight on my heart for decades, and now—one way or another—it was going to be resolved.

There followed months of excited letters and photo exchanges, then careful, joyful, tearful visits. This interrupted relationship blossomed and became something very precious and vital to both of us—it was the healing of a family that had long been incomplete.

As the supposed “leader” of a healing community, I received the greatest healing of all.

Life on the Road

Irene Schemberger, my partner's beloved mother and the heart of our community, passed away in 1998. Our group lost our focus and our home, which we could no longer afford to maintain. We found ourselves couch surfing with friends and living in our trusty Dodge Caravan.

I traveled to spend time with my newly-rediscovered daughter in her home in Colorado Springs. She was called to begin a gay and lesbian community in the shadow of Focus on the Family, a right wing Christian group whose national headquarters was located only a few miles away. This seemed a worthy undertaking, and I stayed a few months to lend a hand.

Our troop of young friends from Rhine Center scattered, following activist callings among Native Americans and the tree-sitters in the old-growth forests of Oregon. Some months later several of us were reunited and traveled to California, where a friend had invited us to join him at a community at another old stage coach inn, this one in San Gregorio, halfway between San Francisco and Santa Cruz.

Dr. Dave and I arrived in a community that needed our help. We brought our experience, and our status as “out of town experts,” to bear on the issues.

Lesson: Your Grandmother's Gravy Boat

We started by thoroughly cleaning the kitchen. This was greeted with praise and general joy.

Then we cleaned the cupboards and threw out everybody's old food. The uproar commenced.

“Where's that half package of Rice-A-Roni I had in here? It was still good!”

“What happened to my collection of spices? My mother gave me those!”

We started talking about ownership, utility, and efficiency. Things got a little better.

There were good lessons in this community as well. The first was, although you may want to share your treasures, don't do it. Keep the family heirloom on your altar in your bedroom. Do not put your fellow community member in the position of being the person you will always remember as the one who broke your grandmother's gravy boat.

Lesson: One Foot in the Stirrup

The other lesson was, know when it's time to leave. As Mohammad (Allah praise his name) said, “If you insist on telling people the truth, do so with one foot in the stirrup.”

The community members seemed grateful for our work with them, but we could tell there

was tension building. People can only take so much growth at a time.

We planned a party. We used every egg in the refrigerator to make an almost hallucinogenic flourless chocolate cake and found a couple of very dusty—and very good—bottles of wine that someone had hidden in the basement. Everyone had a great time, and the love flowed free.

We were gone by morning.

Into the Forest

We traveled up the coast to Eugene, Oregon, and spent some months among the Black Bloc anarchists and Earth Liberation Front folks working to save the old-growth forests. We stayed with friends in the Whiteaker District, working in the Food Not Bombs kitchens that served food in the parks five days a week. We helped cultivate gardens and prepare food to support the activist communities living on platforms in the

**We cleaned the cupboards and
threw out everybody's old food.
The uproar commenced.**

trees. There were actions and marches every week, with street puppets and teargas.

Lesson: Know Your Limits

As 1999 drew to a close, change was in the wind. A lungful of teargas during one of the marches reminded me that I was not a street-fighting teenager any more. I began to long for the security of being in the middle of a continent near a large body of water.

Dr. Dave was thinking about his family—there was another grandchild on the way. The World Trade Organization action in Seattle was on the horizon, and we had to decide whether we were prepared to go to jail.

**Riverwest, John McKnight, and
Grace Lee Boggs**

It was time to head east. We gathered the remnants of our traveling troupe from Rhine Center, and headed back toward Wisconsin. Before too long we were standing on Center Street in Riverwest, in front of a little café called Fuel, with flickering neon signs in the windows that read, “Killer Coffee” and “Lousy Service.”

“This is good,” Dr. Dave said.

“This is very good,” I agreed.

We settled in. I was fortunate to get a job as a community organizer, although it would be some years before our president would make that job title part of the general parlance. I worked by way of a government grant administered by the YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee and brought my radical ideas into some kind of reasonable boundaries. It helped that my territory was Riverwest, the most integrated neighborhood in the most segregated city in America—about 70 percent white, 15 percent black, 10 percent Hispanic. It was also the place where hippies bought houses back in the '60s.

Most community organizers work in the field for about two years, then get a different job. Like senator. I stayed for more than a decade.

The result was satisfying. I used many of my community skills in my job. We helped create the Riverwest Food Co-op and Café (Food for People, Not for Profit!), the Riverwest Neighborhood Association, a monthly newspaper called the *Riverwest Currents*, a bike trail along the river, many large community gardens. It was a productive time.

Lesson: Love—Or At Least Like—Your Neighbor

As the decade continued, I started attending meetings of a group at Marquette University in Milwaukee called the Project for Community Transformation. I found myself coming full circle, as the group was convened by Dr. Robert Pavlik, whom I had first met at High Wind. It was through this group that I encountered the work of John McKnight and his Asset-Based Community Development ideas. McKnight, by the way, has the distinction of being the person who first hired a young organizer named Barack Obama.

McKnight's techniques taught me some powerful lessons about building community. His "three questions," where people explore their gifts, skills, and passions, have been known to create empathy and kindness even among the most cantankerous and individualistic of neighbors.

We used McKnight's techniques to begin a year-long project called "Abundant Riverwest."

Lesson: Building a Shared Philosophy

The other major figure in my community organizing education was Grace Lee Boggs, the Communist philosopher from

Detroit who turned 100 years old this summer. Her question, "What does it mean to be human in the 21st century?" has sparked powerful and courageous visioning processes in our neighborhood.

We implemented the techniques developed in her "Re-Imagine Detroit" projects in a process we called "Re-Imagine Riverwest." We then took it a step further into "Manifest Riverwest."

Trusting the Future

Where am I right now? My life is changing once again.

I am remembering a particular lesson of the past: that we cannot know the outcome of our actions. Last year I retired from my job, leaving the seeds I have planted to grow, once again hoping for the best.

Lesson: The Power of Hospitality

But the neighborhood is in good hands. Riverwest has a vibrant cooperative movement championed by energetic young activists. They have created the Public House, the second cooperative bar in the country (of course there's a bar—it's Milwaukee); People's Books, a cooperative book store; Solar Riverwest, a cooperative project offering affordable solar panels to homeowners. Other cooperatives are in the formative stages—a bakery, a canning collective, a new housing co-op.

We have all learned powerful lessons. Perhaps the most powerful is this: a community needs to be hospitable. People need to care about each other, and to desire to stay together and work together. They need to know and respect each other's gifts, skills, and passions.

It's not about money. It's about the wealth of living in a neighborhood that you and your friends and family have built for yourselves and your elders and your children.

And so the world changes. 🌸

Janice Christensen retired from her position as Community Organizer in the Riverwest Neighborhood of Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 2014. She had held the position since 2001. Her checkered past includes owning a small advertising agency; partnering in a potato farm; and living at High Wind, an intentional community in Plymouth, Wisconsin. She earned a Master of Theological Studies degree from Harvard Divinity School in 1996.



An Exercise in Community-Building: Five Questions

- 1) What are your gifts?
- 2) What are your skills?
- 3) What is your passion?
- 4) What do you know well enough to teach?
- 5) What would you like to learn?

These questions (either in the short form with the first three, or the full five) are asked interview-style between pairs of people as a community-building exercise. Then the pairs introduce each other to the full group using the information they have gathered. This process is detailed in *The Abundant Community* by John McKnight and Peter Block.

—J.C.

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COMMUNITY: Innovation and Shifting Mindsets

By Jewell Riano-Bradley

The mindsets of communities, as well as individuals, operate in different paradigms and different stages of consciousness, making change a long and challenging process. When I think of community, I think first of the requirement to build relationships, one at a time over time. Margaret Wheatley's words resonate: "Relationships, relationships are all there is." She adds: "Everything in the universe only exists because it is in relationship to everything else. Nothing exists in isolation. We have to stop pretending we are individuals that can go it alone."

This reflection goes back to a very creative and amazing time when relationships and community on every level seemed to come together guiding my path. Challenging, but amazing. As artist, teacher, and visionary, I grew up thinking that with education and hard work I could change the world. After a few years of successfully teaching and supervising teachers, I accepted a position as assistant principal in an inner city school district. My idealistic paradigm collided with what I witnessed.

Colliding Paradigms

The daily reality of school for middle school students was far removed from my philosophical beliefs and experiences in education. I believed on a very deep level that the philosophy of dealing with troubled children needed to change. The educational system was not serving their needs. The teachers wanted them "out" and classroom order restored.

As an example, one day a rather small seventh grader came to my office with a teacher's referral. The referral was a part of a formalized discipline procedure approved by the district administration and teachers' union, with recommended sequential actions responding to specific behavior—or rather misbehavior. This particular teacher was requesting a detention as punishment for disruptive classroom behavior. I counseled the student, delivered the detention slip, and attempted to call the home. Two days later the same boy was returned to my office with a request for suspension—he did not serve the detention. I gave him the suspension notice and informed him that he would have to return for a conference with a parent. An hour or two after school, clearing my desk after a long day, the security guard asked what she should do about a student who was "hiding" around the corner, still on school grounds, and refused to go home. She brought the boy into my office. I practiced my counselor training, question after question; after a long wait, the student told me that he could not go home because his mother would beat him, "butt naked." Protective services arrived a while later and found old scars from previous punishments on his back and legs. He was placed in his grandmother's care until further arrangements.

The creative and amazing time came a few years later when I joined two colleagues and took a course called *Sustainable Futures*, a graduate seminar at a local university. Complexity and chaos theories were basic to the views discussed in the class. Among them were the theories of paradigm shift by Thomas Kuhn, chaos theory as interpreted by John Cleveland, and theories of consciousness evolution by Ken Wilber. The passion aroused about the need to change education continued after the course ended. I had the good fortune to join in "community" with the professor, his colleagues, and a few other like-minded individuals to design a very radical and innovative school model.

An Innovative Educational Community

We hoped the model would alter the educational scene by showing that within a nurturing environment with caring adults we could change the outcome of these middle school students who became unmotivated in traditional schools. We wanted these students to broaden their horizons and understand a larger worldview. The intended curriculum emphasized global education and sustainability. The school was a progressive model, with multi-age groups and in-

terdisciplinary, project-based learning—student-centered rather teacher-centered. The goal was to create homeschool-like settings to nurture and facilitate learning. Rather than in traditional school buildings, the small classes, which we called “learning clusters,” would be located in separate downtown buildings such as the art museum, a neighborhood community center, and a downtown branch of the university.

Getting such a radical idea into the large bureaucracy of a public school system required many voices—building new relationships of like-minded individuals. We had to connect with people who would listen and join in support for the project. We held meetings with groups and met with individuals over coffee. We also walked out of a few offices of business organizations who felt it unlikely they could offer a classroom space for 16 teenagers. Community was established on many levels—university, school district administration, school board members, teachers, and even a sizable group of concerned parents who were homeschooling their children rather than accepting traditional school settings.

My heart and soul were into this project. The designing part was exhilarating. For me, as an artist and educator, putting the pieces together to open the school, from selecting furniture and facilities to faculty and staff, was like painting a masterpiece. I accepted the position as administrator. The school opened August 28, 1998! I later wrote this about the opening day:

The opening of a new school—what a memorable moment! A reality long anticipated in the process of creating an innovative model for a small urban middle school. It was the end of the day and the students were on their way home! As the last student left through the glass doors, the author contemplated the moment and marveled at the accomplishment of opening an innovative middle school with classrooms outside of a school building. The staff gathered onto the large upper patio of the Milwaukee Art Museum overlooking Lake Michigan after dismissing students for the day. Imagine, students going to school in a setting as beautiful as this—a place where the most treasured objects of civilization were carefully guarded, near a park of trees and flowers, and overlooking the lake expanding into the horizon. Certainly, any educator would envy this experience. As the excitement of the day was exchanged, a colleague opened an umbrella. We gathered under the umbrella as a warm gentle rain started to fall.

Students responded positively to the model. The plans and design were practical and research-based, producing an environment where students at this age were very engaged in the learning activities and pursued projects with great enthusiasm.

Learning Clusters

Breakfast was delivered to each site and the educational assistants became the caretakers (and educators) along with the teachers. They went on day trips to educational events in the community, primarily because they had access to city buses with passes given to the students in lieu of yellow school bus transportation. The students would sometimes visit the other Global Learning Center sites and would come together as a whole school for various programs. If a student misbehaved in front of his fellow classmates, the students themselves “called him down”—showing pride of their own learning cluster. The groups took on identity as if they were families. The “learning cluster” seemed to be an appropriate name for the classrooms.

In the spring, as the second school year closed for summer break, the staff wrote

These questions provided a framework for building the school's curriculum.

**Global Learning Center
CLUSTERS OF LEARNING**

- World Order Questions**
 - Peace and war
 - Environmental and ecological issues
 - Global economy
 - World trade relationships
 - World history, geography, demography
- Social Order Questions**
 - Exploring the meaning of community
 - a) Personal and civic rights/responsibilities
 - b) Interrelationships of individual freedom and commitments to larger wholes
 - c) Causes of conflicts created by factors of diversity and power (for example: race, ethnicity, socio-economics, gender, age)
- Material Survival Questions**
 - Exploring processes that relate to earning a livelihood in the global job market
 - Exploring processes that create skills leading to personal and community self-sufficiency as it relates to:
 - a) Physical health
 - b) Mental health
 - c) Energy conservation
 - d) Basics such as food, shelter, and clothing
- Technology and Scientific Frontiers Questions**
 - Exploring existing and emerging technologies, in such fields as:
 - a) Electronics
 - b) Telecommunications
 - c) Biology, genetics
 - d) Energy conversion and use
- Value Order Questions**
 - Exploring the moral bases of our existence through the exploration of the following key values:
 - a) Inter-connectedness to ourselves and others
 - b) Anticipating consequences for our choices; learning to make alternative choices
 - c) Exercising the rights and responsibilities of participating in a democratic society
 - d) Adaptation to challenges of ambiguity, complexity, chaos, and rapidly changing circumstances

comments reflecting on the school year. A few statements related the difficulty of lesson planning for teaching multi-aged groups and the desire for more parents to be involved and the technology to work better. However, most of the statements were very positive regarding the growth for the students. One teacher stated, “Most of my students grew in academics due to their confidence level being high. We have a great deal of students who became proficient.” Another stated, “I enjoyed watching the connective spirit develop and grow at sites—particularly in terms of students caring for each other and the adults as well.” It was encouraging to hear that students gained “self-esteem, self-confidence, and were learning to act from a place of collective concern rather than from solely individual self-interest,” and “the students have become as close as family, which in turn made them better individuals, students, and friends.”

The challenge of acquiring appropriate staff, teachers, and assistants was an undercurrent; there was a teacher shortage and it was difficult to identify those who could meet the challenge of this innovative model. The model required a breaking down of the traditional role of teaching. In several cases, the teachers seemed to have more difficulty than the assistants. Even though the idea of a homeschool-like environment sounded good, the teachers had experienced classrooms on their own; they were not accustomed to working in collaboration with other adults.

Although the idea of a homeschool-like environment sounded good, the teachers were not accustomed to collaborating with other adults.

During the first year, one teacher (a substitute) exemplified a teacher/leader, working collaboratively with the two assistants and 16 students in his two sites. It was evident from student work and observation that the practice of collaboratively creating lesson plans was ongoing throughout the year. The assistants often expressed that they had great working relationships because the teacher assumed the leadership and encouraged each person to work in

areas of strength. He shaped the learning activities around the strengths of the individuals in the group. They planned together with respect for each person.

In most cases, when teachers who demonstrated leadership and the ability to “teach for understanding” were unavailable, the assistants had to take charge to keep the sites running smoothly. Usually the assistants were happy to assume the responsibility. They were not trained in the traditional pedagogical strategies and in some cases were more able to move into a pattern of “helping” the students with great pride. They took the description literally to create a homeschool-like environment. They facilitated the students’ own learning. In some sites, they became the nurturing and caring adults that were missing in the lives of some students and certainly were missing in the traditional school.

Some of the assistants had degrees in business or liberal arts, and even though they did not have a certification, they felt they had more experience than some of the teachers who were assigned to the school. This gap in certification and position became an underlying source of conflict between personalities—in addition to the basic differences in temperament and problem-solving abilities.

Entry of the Bureaucracy

The first wind of discontent appeared a few weeks before the end of the second year. During the first two years the school was left to operate on its own, as planned and approved by its founders and the school board—meaning that it did not have unnecessary interference from the teachers’ union and central administration. Then it all changed. A complaint from one of the educational assistants claimed that her colleague who recently became a licensed teacher and moved into a vacant teacher position was doing the same work as before—and getting paid twice as much. She called the teachers’ union requesting an informational meeting for staff. That evening, a loyal teacher called me at home and said that she attended the meeting only for information and wanted our conversation to remain anonymous. She said that something happened at the meeting that no one expected or wanted to happen. A few days later my district supervisor called to inform me that a group grievance had been filed—without warning or even a professional or decent phone call, the union representative filed a group grievance claiming that the assistants were working beyond their contracted duties.

In the fall of the third year the response to the grievance began. It required hours and hours of additional paper processing and was very emotionally stressful. The complaint resulted in an arbitration hearing. Arbitration hearings required the staff members to discuss the action of their fellow colleagues. This process essentially destroyed the trust established in our “learning community,” and left the school psychologically bankrupt. The community that was so “together” seemed to be unraveling. By the end of the school year, teachers were angry at teachers and assistants, and internal turmoil seemed endless. I was exhausted. In the end the grievance was settled and very little extra pay was awarded to the complaining assistants—such a waste of time.

The three-year leases were up and before school opened in the fall the school was moved into the third floor of a traditional middle school building. Symbolically, the system seemed to be pulling our little school back into traditional ways of operating. Moving into a central location was a major compromise to the original model. My journal entry expresses my feelings at the time; I wrote:

During the meeting with [district leaders] it felt like being in a house of strangers even though they were colleagues for several years. The feeling was one of defeat or perhaps one of humiliation—I was asking for help. I felt beaten up by the events of the year after the arbitration hearing. I felt betrayed by the people in the school and by the union. Now, I was asking for help from those who held the position of power in the school district, and I was not sure they understood the program or wanted it to continue.

A Glimmer of Hope

There was a glimmer of hope at the very end of that third year. Watching over the students at closing ceremonies and noting the busy activity of the staff, one thing was amazingly clear: caring for the students had not wavered!

We continued on during the next two years with several new and dedicated teachers. Those who were unable to work with the original model moved on. Teachers who were very dedicated took over the classes with fewer assistants. I feel that we were able to truly establish a learning community and work in collaboration during those last two years.

The Global Learning Center closed at the end of its five years. I retired, finished my dissertation, and now enjoy my work as an artist.

The leadership structure at the time of the startup of the GLC was dynamic and supportive on many levels—university professors, the school board, superintendent, teachers, parents, and students. However, the support at the district level was very short-lived. Superintendents’ positions changed; there was no longer direct interest from the district administration. There were five superintendents during the five years of the GLC. The board and the new superintendents focused on creating neighborhood schools which included kindergarten through eighth grades, which would replace some of the middle schools.

Researchers claim the reason education goes through so many phases to end up with business as usual is that things have not changed from the industrial age mindset. I believe that changing paradigms and accelerated technology will force the change. Today, I simply aspire to understand this changing world. 🌸

Jewell Riano-Bradley is retired from public and private school administration. In 2007, she received her doctorate in education—Leadership for the Advancement of Learning and Service. She lives in Mequon, Wisconsin with her husband and two Lhasa Apsos, and enjoys time with her four grandsons. She currently makes and exhibits her artwork, and serves as a consultant in education and leadership.



A group of GLC students during the first days of school, downtown in front of the public library.



Students and their parents in a learning cluster on opening day.



Photos courtesy of Jewell Riano-Bradley

Space, Mk 3 Mod 3

By David Lagerman

Editor's Note: In COMMUNITIES #168 we featured the futuristic story "May the Circles Be Unbroken: Life in Wetherweed" by Michael Bridge. What follows is another glimpse at a possible future community, flowing from the keyboard of High Wind Association Board member David Lagerman.

• • •

Earth to Dennis

From: Lebeck@Lawrence.edu
To: DDargay@Haldemann.iss
XMIT GO

Hello Dennis,

This coming semester I will indeed be teaching a course on the nature of the societies in the space colonies! Thanks for your letter to my dean to further this along. Hey, buddy, now I could use your help again. Could you write a short piece with your impressions and thoughts about being a community resident in Haldemann? I know you are both a resident and a sort-of philosopher concerning these space habitats in general, and becoming enthusiastic now that you've got almost four years under your belt inside Haldemann, this fantastic rotating tank in space.

Thanx, Oscar

• • •

About My Space Colony

From: DDargay@Haldemann.iss
To: Lebeck@Lawrence.edu
RET XMIT

Hi, there, Oscar Lebeck, your Professorship, Sir,

Congratulations. This should be fun. I will indeed hold forth, with some restraint on running on and on, as is my usual wont.

Ahem:

Haldemann, where I live, is a typical habitat, one of the "Heinlein Class" of space artifacts. It's a rotating cylinder 1.8 kilometers long and with a diameter of 1,500 meters. We live on the inner surface, as the rotation provides a force such that "down" is in every direction on that surface. It's divided into six living "land" surfaces separated by six transparent segments to let the sunlight in, reflected by giant mirrors. The transparent parts are like lakes, with three meters of water in them, to provide the required shielding against cosmic rays and such. It was all built by puny humans, and almost entirely from materials available out here in the inner Solar System.

Our community is materially self-sufficient in almost all ways, with agriculture at the base, just as in any Earth society. Commerce with other human habitations is growing. I am proud to say we are now making the best beer in our sector (in our opinion) and are exporting some to three or four neighbor habitats.

There is no Earth-like day or night, so we have evolved a rotating kind of shift schedule for ourselves. It is specifically designed to prevent dividing our community into three time-defined groups that hardly know one another. That would be no fun. We're a remark-

ably harmonious bunch, and the scheduling scheme is worth the effort to further that.

We do fall into three broad functional categories, though, and yet that does not make for social stratification, either. The three are: the people assigned to the "command structure," the "high earners," and the "local function/local business" people.

Now, about category one, the "command structure," and a short digression:

You Earth people should be well familiar with your own two-tier planetary governance now. After Boston vanished in a ground-based nuclear blast (and the crater to this day is filled with seawater), an ironclad planetary Nuclear Control Commission was put into place. The next time (heaven forbid) such a thing were to happen, any nation or group not in full cooperation with the Commission would be "presumed guilty," with probable draconian consequences. In this respect, the planet



has a kind of world government, as you must know.

I mention this because there is a parallel with the governance in any of these bigger communities out here. Haldemann is a big air tank. It's like a ship, and any number of things that could go wrong would mean instant (or worse, slow) death. Therefore Haldemann includes, but is not limited to, a military-style command, and command structure, to oversee things like structural integrity, essential biological oversight, energy and electronic systems, enforcement of certain regulations, and so on. Commander Ruthstaven has absolute authority within her sphere, delegated to several of her people in well-defined parameters. Our overall governance has been called a "command democracy," with political changes possible on one level, but certain aspects having to function in "the right way," all the time, without fail.

It is interesting to notice how well this works. Partly that is because prospective residents are screened to try to weed out personalities that would tend to become peevish about this necessary structure. "Commander Ruthie" and her officers and technical oversight people are perforce a bit separate, but people generally try to downplay this as much as possible.

We "civilians" lightheartedly speculate that there are "controls on the controls," people here who are under cover and who could report to the parent company about Command conduct.

Most residents have to pay pretty steep rent, because the enterprise that built this thing had, of course, large capital costs, and carries debt out to 30 or so years. For that fiscal reason alone, most of us are upper-end workers in various fields, ones where our skills are of value anywhere on Earth, as well as in the growing space civilization. I'm one of those people; but my wife is an aquaculture specialist, falling into the "local function" category. She gets her hands dirty a lot. (And then some. She tumbled into a breeding tank last week. Aarg.) This second category of folks are subsidized in the sense that they pay lower rent, recognizing their essential, if rather hybrid status as "ship's crew," you might say.

The third category of people is the farmers, the operating technicians, some civil governance people, local retail businesspeople, and so on. Even in a little village like this, there's a good deal of business. For instance, we have Ken's, a faux "rustic" tavern down in the

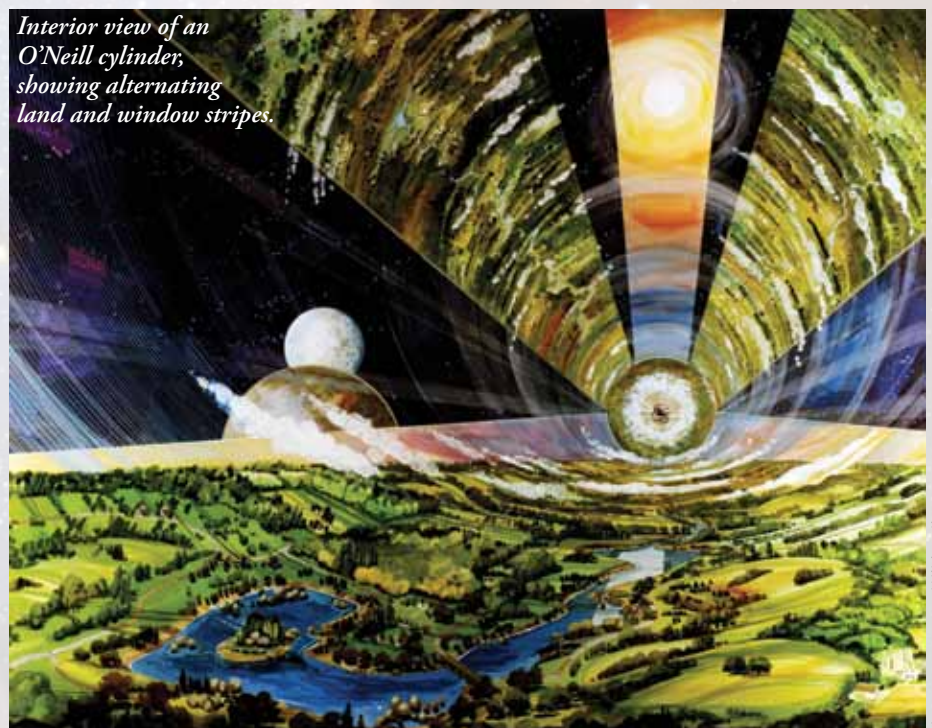
middle of D section. Kenny and his boys and girls make that great beer, four different kinds, and now it's being exported, as I say. Karla and Frances have a clothing shop with five employees, who can repair anything, run up all sorts of clothes, from work outfits to frilly stuff, and upholstery. Nearly all fiber is recycled, part of the larger self-contained ecology in these habitats.

We raise all of our food, and the plant life here, from blue-green algae to the great vegetables, are essential to the ecology: that's where the oxygen we breathe comes from. We have trees, too, although they're still small. We

We raise all our food, enjoy handcrafting, and purposely avoid the mindless assignment of nearly all work to machines.

raise chickens and fish. Lots of fish.

There is real, practical work to be done here. That's an important thing, as Earth people, often deprived of useful work and social roles because of intense automation, increasingly sink into despair. You know this well. We are doing better, purposely avoiding the mindless assignment of nearly all work to machines, and we enjoy a lot of handcrafting.



Interior view of an O'Neill cylinder, showing alternating land and window stripes.

Images courtesy Wikipedia

Socially, our lives here seem to run the gamut, from people who are fairly private, and others who are involved in the social whirl, such as it is.

Privacy, the “private sphere,” is well respected, here and generally in the big habitat communities. Peoples’ family arrangements, sexual practices, and such are just private, short of some violation of peoples’ rights or welfare.

Our community has yoga classes and exercise groups, card groups, video game enthusiasts, softball, you name it. People who fly, too, how about that? The flying club calls themselves the Wing-olas, and they now have the new strap-ons brought over from the geniuses (and flying fools) in Pavlik, a sister colony. If you take off from one of the high balconies where the air is not rotating as much with the rotating surfaces, you’re in business. Remember: there isn’t any actual gravity here, we just enjoy the equivalent at ground level of five-eighths G, from centrifugal force.

We do have a semi-formal kind of civil governance going, and even a little court system, plus professionals as well as amateurs to help with disputes that may arise, and expert coaching on behavioral styles and conduct. However, this place is tailored psychologically, as are most of these habitats, in that potential residents are screened to weed out people who might be troublesome. This has become fairly sophisticated, and extends to putting value on people exhibiting a higher level of consciousness or a worldview in the space of which love, compassion, and higher spiritual intelligence are more likely to flourish. If this sounds outlandish or unlikely, let me say this: giving this dimension major import and legitimacy has been a key to the viability of Haldemann and its sister habitats.

This emphasis was just as hard won as are the other safeguards to prevent another major tragedy out here, just as Earth survivors and their successors have learned some very hard lessons. That big disaster was, of course, the tragic loss of Hamilton, the first of these O’Neill Cylinder-type space habitats, in a social, technical, full-system failure. Not as dramatic as the loss of the Titanic, maybe, but it killed a lot more people!

Purposeful striving for equanimity among space habitat people does bear fruit in ways that are subtle and hard to describe. It’s generally NICE here, and because it can become like the air one breathes, one forgets to think it such a blessing. I was reminded of that when one of my colleagues recently returned from a visit to Earthside (London, Glasgow, and Oxford) and remarked on the contrast as he re-experienced British life: “My Brit people are not a bunch of savages or anything, but there are...differences.” Right. The habitats, since they know what is good for them, more or less screen out the jerks to begin with, and anybody who turns out to

be an irretrievable jerk is outta here. Jerk removal is ultimately a Command level function. Oh, my British friend? He came home with a little problem: a rather bad head cold. Isolation for 10 days. We don’t tolerate colds, either.

Finally, I think there may a deep paradox developing in this life in space. Cultural historian William Erwin Thompson said, “History is a relationship between the infinity of consciousness and the ground of a society’s local identity.” We don’t have much history here yet, while having a growing local identity in this odd community that includes a certain amount of control. (Thompson was no fan of space

habitats. He was reflexively anti-control.) In my short time here, though, I have noticed among some of us a vibrant participation in a kind of transcendence and even mysticism. In the infinity of space, despite those aspects of control, perhaps an infinity of consciousness is opening up among ourselves.

Could it be that the dreams of an end to human adolescence and the dawn of a decent, compassionate society might first be realized out here? We are beginning to think that what is happening here in the space communities civilization may constitute

a model for what must happen if Earth is not to descend again into the misery and near Armageddon of its recent history.

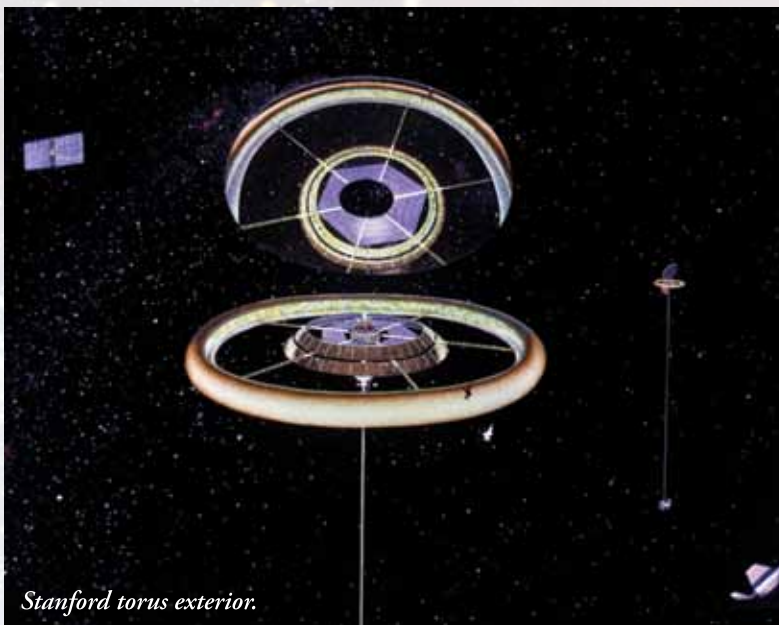
(Oscar, feel free to futz with this, and if you want expansions, clarifications, or so, just squirt me the requests. Here’s to the joys of vacuum!)

Dennis



Author’s Note: *The above is fiction, of course, but the point is that if humanity is to survive on Earth, our “pale blue dot,” we need to reinvent ourselves. The alternative is to join the long list of civilizations that have vanished, and because our present civilization is a planetary community, dysfunctionality is now an existential threat to the species. In the present gathering crisis, the chances for our actually achieving space habitation are now nil, in my view.* 🍷

David Lagerman was a member of the High Wind Association when it became an intentional community, and still lives in the little country neighborhood that it settled into. He still serves on the board of the Association Foundation. His career was at the Milwaukee Journal newspaper, in the editorial library. He is a technical/philosophical consultant at a major nonprofit in Plymouth, Wisconsin, and serves on the board there. He is househusband and assistant to wife Louise Mann, a private piano teacher. David’s card says he is a “Sustainability Philosopher,” and he has had a lifelong interest in space.



Stanford torus exterior.

EVIDENCE AND BELIEFS: Lessons from Oberlin

By Carl N. McDaniel

Human communities, extending thousands of generations into our hunter-gatherer past, have held deep, common beliefs that bonded them together, thereby permitting survival. More recently, science has provided evidence-based reality that often conflicts with earlier beliefs. I have witnessed this clash of approaches, specifically related to the veracity of climate science, in my home community of Oberlin, Ohio, which is attempting to change its belief-based worldview to one that is evidence-based.

Applying Science in the Community

I became a natural scientist because I could find answers in science to how the natural world works, if I asked the right questions. Fundamental rules do exist. Working with people is a lot messier. However, to be useful, understandings need to be applied to human endeavors.

I gravitated to studying the processes that control plant flowering, because people need food. I was concerned about population growth, too, and began giving talks on overpopulation to general audiences in the 1980s. In 1992, I shifted my academic interests to environmental science and the interface between biology and economics. In the process, I became a colleague of David Orr, who was then the head of Oberlin College's Environmental Studies program. I organized EnviroAlums in 2002, an Oberlin alumni group, and was then appointed to the Alumni Council Executive Board to bring an environmental perspective to their deliberations. My loose connections to Oberlin had become substantive. In December 2006, Mary, my wife, and I decided that Oberlin would be our next home after 33 years in Troy, New York.

We were bringing our 3 kW photovoltaic (PV) system with us, and needed net metering, which would allow us to feed our electricity into the grid and use it as our battery as well. I spoke with Oberlin Municipal Light and Power System's (OMLPS) director. OMLPS did have net metering. Unfortunately, he did not accept the reality of climate change, and the utility was not interested in PV on a larger scale. The director believed coal was the only energy source that could provide Oberlin with base power 24/7. We then agreed to disagree over the importance of renewable energy and the need to get off coal.

Oberlin City Council in the summer of 2007 approved by a vote of 4-3 to enter into a 50-year contract for electricity from a to-be-built coal-fired power plant. Orr, David Sonner (our real estate scout in Oberlin), Mary, and I found it hard to accept that Oberlin would be signing up for half a century of coal-based electricity. If this contract held, we'd committed ourselves to a community that had just embraced a fossil fuel future.

By effective campaigning against the coal contract, Sonner and three others were elected to City Council. In January 2008, the newly elected Council voted 4-3 to withdraw from the coal project. The City Manager and much of staff did not support Council's decision, but the four held.

Over several years of often difficult back-and-forth involving the City Council, the City Manager, and others, the City found a replacement for the coal in landfill gas, and then found a way to meet its commitments to ICLEI's Cities for Climate Protection and the Clinton Foundation Climate Positive Development Program (CFCPDP) by passing a totally revised Climate Action Plan (CAP) in 2013. This CAP, unlike its initial version, enabled Oberlin to move from Candidate to Participant status in CFCPDP, a major accomplishment of The Oberlin Project—a citywide collaboration fostered by Oberlin College to create a replicable model where sustainability is the default setting.

These concerted efforts of dedicated citizens, often in the face of obstacles erected by climate change deniers, have championed the consensus of climate scientists that climate instability has been prompted by human activities.

Creating a Positive Energy Home

On a delightful Memorial Day morning



*Trail Magic
living-dining room.*

in 2007, we met with Sonner and Doren Portman at his property, two abandoned houses on five acres a mile from downtown Oberlin. This was among the last of the best land in Oberlin. We drove back to Troy amazed at our good fortune in finding this place. In August, just eight months after deciding to move from Troy, we closed on what we'd later name Trail Magic.

Our close friends, David and Harriet Borton, had built a high performance passive solar house in 1981. For years, we had coveted their home and wanted one like it. Mary commented, "If there is ever a time to build a solar home, it is now!"

Soon after we agreed to purchase Portman's land, I began conversations with Donald Watson, who had been Dean of Architecture at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in the 1990s, but is now in Connecticut. Watson was a Peace Corps Volunteer in 1961 working on solar houses in Africa, and had written several seminal books on solar design.

We worked well together, and he knew how to guide us to do the right thing. The most important decision in creating a home for the 21st century is size. Watson had given us all we needed in 40 percent less space than we originally had. But we thought the living-dining room needed to be bigger.

"Carl, tell me now many times in a year will you need more space?" Don asked. We estimated three days, using our guest book to establish the approximate number of hours. Don queried, "How can we ever attain sustainability, if we build to accommodate the one-in-100 event?" He was right.

Two 100-old red oak trees that were near a neighbor's house and on the future site of our vegetable garden needed to come down. I got the idea to lumber the oaks for a pole barn. Then I learned about the emerald ash borer that within a few years would kill all the ash trees in Oberlin. We began a search for someone to lumber the oaks and three-dozen mature ash trees.

When the house was half-finished, we found George Ficke, who had the capacity to mill our trees for flooring, shelves, bookcases, decorative beams, and a dining room table. We were within a week of purchasing bamboo flooring when we arranged to swap our lumber for some flooring that George had available and to do dormer floors, bookcases, shelves, beams, and table after our wood was kiln dried. Mary and I love natural wood—to our delight, much of the finished wood in Trail Magic is from our trees, locally processed.

We have no energy bills. Sunshine provides all our energy. We send the extra, carbon-free kilowatt-hours to the grid for others to use. It is February as I write this article in my study that is brightly daylighted with temperatures of 76 degrees F inside and 12 degrees F outside. The woodstove is cold; the heat-pump off.

Mary and I have hosted maybe three-dozen open houses—one with 350 guests—including being on Ohio's Solar Tour for the past seven years. Perhaps 2,000 people have toured Trail Magic, and every year one or two classes from Oberlin College come. The ground floor was designed for guests—we've provided bed-and-breakfast for many people. We know of at least a dozen houses that have been inspired or informed by Trail Magic. Four are in Oberlin.

In some small way, Trail Magic has complemented the Lewis Center, Orr's award-winning Environmental Studies building that runs on sunshine and teaches the principles of solar power and living locally. Many in Oberlin and elsewhere contend that homes and buildings cannot be affordably powered without fossil fuels, but these beliefs are being challenged with verifiable evidence.

People Change People, Who Change Communities

Watson's schematic design led to a home of elegant simplicity. When in Trail Magic, we, and others, just feel good, at peace, alive. Thermally and visually, a passive solar house is a place of gradual change that enchants our senses that were honed long ago by evolutionary forces. In more than a poetic sense, people living in passive solar dwellings have come home.

We needed a local architect to do detailed design and oversee construction. In our search for a builder I found Joe Ferut. I liked him. He had recognized the need to change how he did architecture and had been reeducating himself on insulation, en-

Thermally and visually, a passive solar house is a place of gradual change that enchants our senses, honed long ago by evolutionary forces.

ergy, and high performance houses, but not passive solar. I believed he would learn much by interacting with Watson and doing Trail Magic. After our first meeting, Joe emailed, "I had a chance to look at Donald's website; it will be an honor to work with him."

If fact, it changed Joe's life. His portfolio lists Trail Magic, Oberlin's first solar-powered home that runs on less than 10 percent of the energy used by the average US home. Ferut is now on the faculty at Kent State's architecture school, designs only high performance houses that incorporate passive solar features, regularly brings students and clients to our home, and has his senior design students take on as their semester design task important projects in local communities.

In fall 2013, 27 students in Joe and Lee Goodman's classes each did a Habitat-for-



Processing waste water at Lewis Center, Oberlin College.

Humanity-like house designed to be passive solar, high performance, and climate positive. Nine teams of three students each produced a site plan including their 27 houses and a nature park landscaped to manage all precipitation on site for Green Acres, a 15-acre parcel of land Oberlin City had purchased several years ago.

Orr and I, along with others, have encouraged the City to develop Green Acres into a climate positive neighborhood, as called for in Oberlin's Climate Action Plan—without success yet. At the same time Ferut, Goodman, Sonner, a few others, and I formed a team and are building one of the student-designed houses in Oberlin as the first house in Zion Community Development Corporation's Affordable Green Housing Initiative.

I became team coordinator and guided us through a tangled mess of unanticipated problems. The City almost killed the project as well as Zion CDC's Affordable Green Housing Initiative by demanding a variance for an old, no-longer-appropriate requirement calling for a ground floor size of 1,000 square feet. The house is designed to be a no-frills replicate of Trail

Magic, all electric, and climate positive. The house—completed in September 2015—is being monitored in detail for electricity and water use to establish performance.

City staff, City Council, and the City itself are not yet fully behind the community becoming climate positive, as might be expected from previously discussed decisions and positions that reflect strongly held beliefs.

Moving beyond Clashes of Worldview

Blending my evolutionary perspective on human nature and my experiences with individuals and groups, I believe creating sustainable communities will require us to culturally manage two major tendencies that have been hardwired into human nature. First, each of us is internally conflicted because evolution resulted in both selfish and cooperative behaviors. These two behaviors constantly vie for expression within each of us. E.B. White stated the conflict well. "I arise in the morning torn between a desire to improve the world and a desire to enjoy the world." We need to culturally enhance a community's capacity to be altruistic while allowing for selfish behavior.

The second tendency is the capacity to believe almost anything regardless of verifiable evidence. Evolution over thousands of generations shaped the brain's tendency to conjure and believe fantasy. The brain also evolved to

(continued on p. 76)



Smith Street house that is currently under construction.



Lewis Center at Oberlin College.

Photos courtesy of Carl N. McDaniel

INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES: Something Old, Something New

By Maureen Gallagher

Intentional communities—people gathering to share life together, to discover meaning, and to have an impact beyond themselves—have been part of the human landscape for centuries. Many predate Christianity. Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism have all had communal aspects which many have chosen. Sufism (Islam), Protestantism, Anglicism, and Catholicism have had and continue to have thriving communities which take their identity from a religious tradition.

This article explores some commonalities between religious communities (both contemporary and classical) and non-religious intentional communities.

Contemporary Religious Communities

In the contemporary world many intentional communities have emerged in the last hundred-plus years which are rooted in a religious tradition, but which expand the usual meaning of communal living. For instance, the Kibbutz movement founded in 1909 continues to thrive in Israel, growing from a single community to 268 Kibbutzim in 2000. The movement was founded by young pioneers from Eastern Europe who wanted to find a new way to live on the soil of their ancestors. The Kibbutzim are organized around democracy particularly, and are not limited to an agricultural focus. A strong work ethic, a family orientation which takes into account individual needs, and the celebration of Jewish traditions make Kibbutzim an integral part of Israeli society. A Kibbutz is built around a community dedicated to mutual assistance, social justice, and common ownership of property, where each contributes according to his or her ability and needs. The development of the Kibbutz played a significant role in the establishment of the State of Israel. The Kibbutz provided support for the individual, social, economic, religious, educational, and cultural needs of its members.

A more recent communal development can be seen in the Community of Sant' Egidio. It was started in the Trastevere section of Rome in 1968 by young adults after the Second Vatican Council. These young people, many under 20 years old, wanted to put the Gospel into action. The Community of Sant' Egidio currently has more than 60,000 members in 73 countries worldwide. The different communities spread around the world share a common spirituality and principles:

- Prayer is central to the overall direction of community life.
- Communicating the Gospel is at the heart of the communal life. It brings meaning and life to the community.
- Solidarity with the poor and elderly is a voluntary commitment and linked to gratuitous service—"a Church for all and particularly the poor" (John XXIII).
- Ecumenism is lived in friendship, prayer, and search for unity.
- Dialogue is a way to foster peace and cooperation.

Living out these principles, the community has been able to broker peace in Mozambique, Kosovo, Albania, Algeria, Balkans, Guatemala, and elsewhere. It has worked on AIDS initiatives in Africa, a hospital in Guinea-Bissau, education, peace, and humanitarian aid throughout the world. Currently one focus of the Community of San Egidio is to eliminate the death penalty, with a special emphasis on Texas. Sant' Egidio is truly a community without borders or walls. It is formed by friendship among people of different nations and cultures. It is the everyday way to express this international human solidarity. Living this global dimension of life together means both to be open to the world and to belong to one family, the family of Gospel disciples.

The Kibbutzim and the Community of Sant' Egidio are very different structurally. The Kibbutzin are tightly structured with all living and most working on the same campus; the Community of Sant' Egidio is loosely structured, with people living and working independently while gathering regularly, in many cases daily, for prayer and mission. Both of these newer forms of religious communities share many things that the more classical religious communities have in common. The Monastic communities—communities sharing a common life, values, and

spirituality—emerged in the fourth through sixth centuries CE, and had a great impact on Western society. Many continue in traditional and adapted forms today.

Classical Religious Communities

In the middle of the sixth century, Benedict wrote the Rule that would subsequently be the basis of communal religious life in the Western world from about 550 to 1500 CE. Those choosing the monastic life lived together, worked together on the monastery grounds, learned together, and prayed together. Gradually in the 12th and 13th centuries those living in communal life traveled from the monastery to do apostolic work such as caring for the sick, sheltering pilgrims, preaching, and teaching in universities.

Communal life in the monasteries had a positive impact on all of society. For instance, agriculture was systematized and advanced by the monks. Architecture in the Western world was enhanced and moved forward to produce both the great Romanesque and later Gothic cathedrals. The monasteries contributed to learning and literacy, and the economy of the times. They advanced civilization.

In the 16th century, Gospel communal life changed for some men called to religious life. The Jesuits in particular moved away from monastic life as such, because the needs of the apostolate called for their schedules to be very flexible, their housing to be more local, their ministries more adaptable. Women religious were still required to live a cloistered “monastic life” or be excommunicated by the Roman Church authorities. Thus you had people like Louise de Marillac declaring herself a “Daughter of Charity” (not a sister) to avoid the Roman restrictions. Women’s communities figured out ways that allowed them to care for the sick, teach, minister to those in need, etc.

Finally in 1900 Leo XIII formally recognized an authentic form of “non-cloistered” religious life, which many women religious live today. From its beginning until now, intentional communal religious life has continued to evolve based on the sociology of the times, the needs of civilization, the work of the Spirit, and insights and charism of the leaders of the day.

Five Characteristics that Sustain Today’s Religious Communities

I have had direct familiarity with religious communities and have been a planning consultant for both men’s and women’s Catholic communities for the past 12 years. Some communities with whom I have worked were as small as 23 people, some as large as 700 people. The median age in most of them was between 65 and 70 years old. My work in facilitating planning sessions in various parts of the country with religious communities has led me to deeply appreciate the members’ desire to provide excellent care for the elderly, as well as their attention to the legacy they are leaving with the hope of creating a better world.

In my experience working with Catholic religious communities for many years, I have found that there are five characteristics that prevail in effective intentional religious communities of both men and women:

1. A founding leader or leaders whose charism continues to inspire

A charism is a gift freely given by God. In Greek it means “gift of grace.” Catholic religious communities have unique charisms. While all the communities I have worked with have charisms embedded in the Gospels, each one is articulated differently. Some talk about the



gentleness and kindness of the Savior; some about search for truth through contemplation; some live out humility and hospitality as Mary did; some talk about a passion for healing; others are called to integrate the Gospel values into daily life.

I have been inspired by women and men religious who can articulate their founding charism as if the leader were still alive and walking the earth. In reality many have been dead for hundreds of years. The charisms of communities which attract people today are both broad and deep enough to continually inspire followers to meet the needs of a contemporary world.

2. A transcendental or spiritual element

This element points to “there is more to life than meets the eye.” It refers to a spiritual reality—a God by any one of many names, or Jesus Christ, or Spirit within and or an evolving Spirit calling people forward. Many charisms explicitly state a particular spiritual focus, acknowledging the presence of the transcendent. For instance, one articulation of the Franciscan charism is centered in the incarnational worldview (Spirit in the world), and in a life of penance or conversion. Contemplation, silence, and meditation have been an essential part of all the communities with whom I have worked.

From the charism or spirituality of the community, the Gospel values and the vows flow. These may include poverty, humility,

contemplation, teaching, peacemaking, care of persons who are poor, and care of the earth.

3. A purpose or mission

This points to the intention or the reason why the community exists. These will vary greatly. Some communities exist to pray and be united in heart and mind with Jesus Christ through prayer for the world and the Church. Others have specific ministries and exist to “participate in the prophetic mission of Jesus to witness God’s love for all creation.” Others have a mission of serving the sick and the poor. Still others exist to proclaim the Gospel through preaching and teaching in order to build a holy and just society and Church. Articulating the community’s mission or purpose for existence in a compelling manner is critical for its survival. Providing opportunities for enriching and deepening experiences—spiraling into new consciousness, in an evolutionary dynamic—has transformed members and expanded their understanding of the human adventure.

4. Agreed-upon “ground rules,” boundaries, mutual expectations

Canonical religious communities have a Rule and Constitution upon which all agree to live. Initial formation programs which last several years “form” the members in the “rules” of life by which they will be expected to live. These are reviewed regularly through ongoing formation, and updated as needed. Many use or adapt the classical “Rules” such as those of St. Augustine or St. Benedict. All focus on the canonical vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, with some extending the vows to include such things as the vow of stability in Benedictine communities and a vow of the Jesuits to obedience to the Pope in regard to the missions.

Besides the formal “rule and constitutions,” communities need to have mutual understandings regarding “ground rules,” boundary issues, cultural mores, and shared expectations of each other. It is in this arena where conflicts or misunderstandings or tensions often arise based on age differences, cultural differences, or personality differences. As one sister said, this is where “all the theology goes out the window and the ‘rubber hits the road.’” Interpersonal struggles, unbridled egos, and pettiness—the human condition—take their toll on religious life as well as the life of all intentional communities.

5. A compelling vision

Vision points to what we want our world or our community to look like in the next five to 10 years. It is a touch point for many in the community. It is the stretching point. It is what keeps people going when the going gets tough! It is what gets people out of bed in the morning! Sustainability is one example of a compelling vision.

Many of the men’s and women’s religious communities that I am working with have undertaken the concept of sustainability as a vital part of their vision. They are talking about ecological sustainability, evolving consciousness, and the sustainability of their legacy—to create a more just society and Church. In her book *Green Sisters*, Sarah McFarland Taylor describes her first-

As one sister said, when it comes to mutual expectations “all the theology goes out the window and the ‘rubber hits the road.’”

hand knowledge of the Sisters whose lives bring together “Catholicism and ecology, orthodoxy and activism, traditional theology and a passionate mission to save the planet. As green sisters explore ways of living a meaningful religious life in the face of increased cultural diversity and ecological crisis, their story offers hope for the future—and for a deeper understanding of the connections between women, religion, ecology and culture.”

The concept of sustainability is but one of a myriad of possibilities for a community vision. The concept is appropriate for a vision statement, as in many cases it connects to the charism, mission, and values of a religious community and interrelates all that to the sense of urgency to care for planet earth.

Connections to Secular Intentional Communities

The five characteristics named above are found in both the Kibbutzim and the Community of Sant’ Egidio as well as in vibrant vowed religious communities today. What do today’s religious communities have in common with intentional communities that may not be based on a religious conviction?

The five characteristics named above can also be an assessment screen for all intentional communities. The founding charism is important, though it is often not well articulated. And in the rapid pace of today’s society, the charism may need to be reinterpreted and expanded to meet contemporary needs. The unfolding or evolving understanding of the underlying charism needs to be articulated in a way that inspires others. In some cases those who were responsible for founding the community need to let go of the original vision to allow modifications to continue to nurture the community.

The transcendental aspect of a community is important. It does not have to be recognized or named in religious or spiritual language. What is important is that there is some acknowledgment that there is more to life than meets the eye. It may be as simple as knowing that when a certain number of people work together for a common goal the energy generated is more than the sum of the individuals. Intentional communities can build transformative energy, beyond what is expected, through the synergy created by working together, sharing ideas, making sacrifices, and not being ego-driven.

Having a mission or purpose is essential for all communities. It is the glue that holds the community together. The purpose must generate passion and its purpose must be beyond itself. The mission must be imagined to make a significant difference beyond the community. A soft, warm, fuzzy mission will not sustain a community.

Agreed-upon procedures, rules, and covenant relationships are what help a community to function. The ways it deals with differences, disagreements, and conflicts mirror its strengths. Until “rules” and mutual expectations are agreed up and dealt with, the community will flounder and waste a lot of energy trying to deal with conflicts and tensions. This is true for both religious and other intentional communities.

Vision is what gives all communities their spark, their passion, and their energy to struggle through the difficult times to achieve some significant things that could not be obtained without the community.

The continuation of courageous religious communities over the centuries, and all they have been able to accomplish as communities, can be an impetus for intentional communities today. The five characteristics named above can be used by all communities to screen for success. Just as both initial and ongoing formation are essential to vibrant religious communities, so too, other intentional communities might well benefit from the wisdom of those who have been contemporary pioneers in forming non-religious life-giving communities. 🌸

The continuation of courageous religious communities over the centuries, and all they have been able to accomplish, can be an impetus for intentional communities today.

Maureen Gallagher has more than 30 years’ experience in leadership, planning, and organizational development. She holds graduate degrees in Theology from the University of Notre Dame and Art History from Dominican University, and a doctorate in Adult Education and Management from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She has taught in more than a half dozen colleges and universities and is also an author, speaker, consultant, and conference facilitator. Currently Maureen is a Senior Consultant with The Reid Group.

The Urge to Connect

By Rachael Love Cohen



My husband, three young kids, and I just made our 14th move. For the past 11 years, I have shlepped my family around with me to sample Jewish communities as if we were tasting fine wines. Actually, the similarity is uncanny, really. A wine tasting guide I recently read said “Tasting wine doesn’t have to be an exercise in snobbery. It only takes a brief pause to develop awareness... Knowing what you like will make it much easier to consistently find what you are looking for.”

I know what I am looking for.

I have unparalleled passion and desire for building authentic Jewish community, which I experienced initially within the framework of Jewish summer camp and synagogue youth group. I long to build for my family, and to offer others, the magic of the camp experience that need not be lost in growing older: the sense of being held and supported through deep connection to others, the tenderness of intimate communal belonging, the feeling of relevance and purpose, and self-definition derived not just from our own individual qualities, but by who we are in relation to community.

And here I sit, a week after my most recent move, still compelled to address the insistent, unrelenting demand I feel from within—to feel relevant and purposeful within Jewish community; to belong to something bigger than myself; to define who I am in the context of something greater than my individual experience alone.

As a stay-at-home mother, these feelings are amplified on a daily basis. I have chosen, and feel blessed, to spend nearly all of my waking hours caring for and chauffeuring my children, cooking my family’s food, and maintaining a household. The majority of this time, I also feel isolated, lonely, and scared at having to “do it all” alone. My husband currently leaves for work before sunrise and returns just before sunset. All the other mothers are in their own routines, in their own neighborhoods, in their own homes. Nearly every day I gaze into the heavens and ask my Creator, “Why? Why am I so very, very alone in this?”

The Jewish community lost a precious young mother, outstanding Jewish professional, and incredible human being this summer.

Since her death, I have been in deep contemplation. I sense that if I died, people would come out of the woodwork. They would express deep sympathies and sadness over the loss of such young life with incredible potential unrealized. They would bring my husband and the kids meals. Help shuttle the girls to school. Offer babysitting. Offer long embraces and shared memories of when they felt close and connected to me.

I cannot stop questioning. Why are these ways of connecting saved for sporadic life cycle events? Why does our culture encourage people to hold back, remain detached and disengaged from those around us? Why does the older generation forsake the younger? Why is there an attitude of “you should be able to do it alone. If you struggle, even suffer (God forbid), oh well. So did we.”?

Why does our culture continue to foster and ingrain individualism at the expense of the human need to feel valued and supported?

With a heavy heart, and often through tears, I must frequently acknowledge to myself that, while I am alive, there are few precious people in my life who are willing or able to express authentic feelings or offer services that would come so easily to them upon my death.

But this is not the way it has to be. I have experienced deep connection before, and I am convinced that contemporary Jewish communities can offer a deeper and more supportive existence than they currently do. 🌸

Rachael Love Cohen is a big-picture thinker, captivated by social systems and social change. She believes deeply in the process of community-building as a means to remedy social disintegration and repair individual well-being. In 2009, Rachael founded New Jewish Communities, with the objective of mobilizing a new grassroots social movement around Jewish intentional community-building. In 2013, Rachael was one of two lay leaders on the planning committee for the inaugural Jewish Intentional Communities Conference in Baltimore, which drew nearly 200 participants from North America and Israel. She has a masters degree in macro social work and community practice, as well as a certificate in nonprofit management.

THE LONG TRAIL HOME: Discovering My Own Community

By *Clistine Morningstar*

Community is like a big wheel with many spokes. I am reminded of the Medicine Wheels, or Sacred Hoops, of Native American spirituality that have been constructed by laying stones in a particular pattern on the ground. Most of them have a center cairn of stones from which lines of stones radiate in spokes to an outer ring of stones forming the periphery. These wheels are considered to be a major symbol of peaceful interaction among all living beings on Earth.

Ideally, a community would embrace this golden rule of honoring “All My Relations.” To the extent that each person in a particular community is included (or not) in a web of cooperation, understanding, and purpose, then that community seems to flourish (or to wither). Wellness of the individual is inseparable from the harmony, or the unity (but not the uniformity) of the group. So the spokes of the wheel can become the different elements that contribute to its well-being.

I now look back over 81 years to remember my various community experiences. The earliest one took place in a big school in the north of England. Having experienced an isolated early childhood in which I had spent much time alone in my big, green backyard, I didn't know how to interrelate with the other children. So I was a shy watcher for quite a long time and always felt rather overwhelmed by the numbers and the noise. But eventually I did very well there as a student, and particularly enjoyed morning assembly where we all sang a beautiful hymn together. Some of those hymns have haunted me all my life! I would say the major spokes in the wheel that sustained the well-being of this school were respect for the teachers, appreciation for what we learned, and a predominating sense of goodwill. When I had to leave at the age of 11 in order to move to a London suburb, I felt wrenched from my growing roots. Some of the spirit of this community has stayed in my heart and it still helps to guide me when I teach young children in the community where I now live.

In due course I was sent away to a girls' boarding-school in Sussex, and starting then, school was a nightmare! This school at times resembled a Dickens' novel in its strict and narrow ways, and we never had a solitary moment. I felt as if I were living in a world without sunlight, and became depressed just as those people who suffer from lack of winter sunlight can become depressed until the spring comes around. Only spring did not come around and I dropped out in heart, mind, and spirit! Some essential spokes that would have contributed to our well-being were definitely missing in the wheel of this community—its stern creed of ethics needed to be complemented by a measure of encouragement and understanding, and its dry pattern of repetition fossilized what could have been the living spirit of the place. From this I learned how crippling the letter of the law without the spirit of the law can be.

Many years later, with my second husband, I discovered another type of community on an island close to Vancouver Island in British Columbia. We had moved there in order to abandon the rush, push, and jostle of city life and we found ourselves part of a loose-knit population of like-minded folks. There we joined an excellent choir, went to a free-wheeling church on Sundays that discussed spirituality but rarely dared to mention the

word “God,” hosted poetry readings, went for backpacking trips with nearby neighbors, built a cabin, and became part of it all. The spokes in this island community wheel were built on neighborliness, recreational and hobby interests, growing small gardens, and fighting the forest industry who were threatening to log the remaining wild areas on the island and desecrate the wildlife there. Such a wheel can sustain one's interest but not one's soul! I was seeking something deeper but didn't yet realize the kind of setting this would require.

During this same time period I worked as a life-skills coach, becoming part of a close-knit working group in a Job Project that helped young people find and keep jobs after a rocky start in their lives. We had nine staff members and we blended well; but although we achieved good results with our clients, the work was repeatedly challenging. There were some life-giving spokes in this work-based community wheel that were new to me—the goal of serving others; dealing with continuous challenge for a positive purpose; and deriving mutual support from working closely with colleagues under good leadership.

Perhaps it would seem that this purposeful work-based community, when added to my more open-ended island-based commu-



A Cosmic Wheel of Destiny ceremony conducted by Spirit Steps Tours.

Photos courtesy of Global Change Media

nity, would provide enough balance between them for a meaningful life, particularly when supplemented by frequent fun visits from my now grown-up children and their families. But I continued to long for deeper meaning and fulfillment—a spiritual element that my own personal truth-search and efforts at meditation did not sufficiently mitigate. When we are ready, it seems our destiny can come to meet us, as I did not plan for the next set of surprising circumstances.

My husband decided to finish the degree necessary to be able to teach in our local school system, and so we took what we thought was a vacation down through the western US in order to look first-hand at two or three universities that required only a year more of study. On the way we stopped at a bookstore where I found a booklet on the vortices at Sedona. It described them as gateways of spiritual energy, and I immediately developed a strong desire to visit them. Because we followed this urge, the next anticipated chapter in our lives that we had so carefully planned never took place. Instead, we experienced the beginning of another story...

Walking along the banks of Oak Creek in Sedona on the day before we were due to return to Canada, I met a woman who began to talk to me about the intentional spiritual community she lived in. She told me they studied *The Urantia Book*—which I was already reading—and that they were receiving continuing revelation as well. In an extraordinary moment of realization that transcended my sense of logic, I knew that destiny was calling me! Despite my dour memories of boarding school, my husband and I both decided to find out more. We did not go back to Canada the next day, but stayed to investigate. Within a few weeks we joined this community that is now based in Tumacácori, Arizona and is

known as Global Community Communications Alliance.

I've now lived at this community for 20 years. At the hub of its life-affirming wheel is the pursuit of personal, group, and planetary transformation, and its many spokes support this ideal. Does this sound like a kind of nirvana? On the contrary it's a tough school, and even though we experience much joy of fellowship it will only really work out for those who fully desire to follow this path of spiritual commitment.

My past experiences in the job community where I was a life-skills coach gave me a grounding in how to deal with continuous challenge. However, my present community doesn't repeat the mistakes of my strict boarding school by embracing a static philosophy. Instead it upholds positive change, and we are all requested to shed our old snake-skins of erroneous habits just as quickly as we can. We obviously can't effect meaningful change in the world if we don't start with ourselves, and this deliberate process of shedding our lower selves is what makes it tough as well as highly rewarding.

In my past community experiences I was able to observe varying degrees of leadership, ranging from good to poor. I'm personally suspicious of leadership until the leader or leaders earn my respect because so often leaders can pursue the goal of personal power. When I first came to Global Community Communications Alliance I learned that there was a hierarchy of leadership consisting first of the cofounders, next the rest of the eldership, and then those who had mandated positions as assistants at various levels. Below that were the broad category of "students," although in a sense everyone here is a student. I wasn't sure what to make of it so I adopted a wait and see policy. In a fairly short time I came to realize that everyone who had leadership authority had fully earned it. I saw that our two well-loved founders, Gabriel of Urantia and Niann Emerson Chase, as well as our dedicated Elders, were able to offer us the wisdom, balance, counsel, and understanding that comes with spiritual ascension.

Over time, this impression has deepened. I see that this pyramid of leadership is very necessary for the well-being of everyone here and that without it we couldn't possibly have sustained our growth and vision. One balancing factor is that we are all are trained and encouraged to become leaders ourselves.

Another spoke in the wheel of this community is the implementation of procedures. These are intended to create commonsense ways of doing things for the general good, rather than

Author Clistine Morningstar.



Clistine conducting the children's choir during a Christmas performance at an assisted living home in Tucson.



Author Clistine and students of Global Community Communications Schools for Teens and Children enjoying A Day in the 1885 Schoolhouse program at the Tubac Presidio State Historic Park.



Sharing concepts and experiences of ecovillage living with a group of international students visiting Global Community Communications Alliance in Tumaacócori, Arizona.



having individuals just do their own thing—which, with 120 people, would make for quite a degree of chaos. At first I often found following procedures irksome, but as I moved gradually from a focus of “me” to “we,” I came to see the wisdom and the logic behind the protocol we were asked to follow.

There is a large quota of goodwill within our community, but at times conflicts do arise as they always will when numerous human beings are gathered together. Our methods of conflict resolution represent another helpful spoke in our community wheel. The type of “care-fronting” and counseling we have developed provide a realistic training in human relationships in which we gradually acquire greater humility and the art of being more transparent.

The kind of counseling we can also seek for personal problems encourages us to improve our relationship with the living spiritual forces in order to align with right action. It sounds Spartan, but it really works when we choose to follow it—because we then move out of victim mode and are capable of being partners with God in our own healing.

All of this requires a degree of what is commonly known as “sacrifice,” but what we’re actually sacrificing are the patterns of our lower-driven selves. In return we experience an increasing sense of who we were created to be, plus a more loving group awareness that I wouldn’t have dreamed possible in my younger years. We also become more suitable vessels to incorporate change in our dark, troubled world. And that is what we came here for.

We seek to create a Sacred Hoop that is life-sustaining in its many aspects. This has meant building our own ecovillage, supporting ourselves from our organic farm produce, and sharing what we learn in these processes with all who seek to know. It’s also meant developing various other outreaches including a hospice that gives comfort to many, and a legal department that supports those who are in the immigration process.

Another life-affirming spoke of our Medicine Wheel is our dedication to the arts. We are all encouraged to develop our artistic talents in order to express and share beauty, truth, and goodness. We thus reach out to the general public through our own talented musicians, visual artists, and writers, and we have our own arts center in Tucson.

Through these many aspects of our life together I’ve at last found a community that matches my soul-longings. With all the challenges, fellowship, vision, laughter, sweat,

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Moving ahead at the Hermitage

By Johannes Zinzendorf

The last time I wrote about the Hermitage in these pages was in 2012, following the brutally mindless murders of our beloved turkeys by two local punks. The shock was so great, the senseless acts so unexpected, that all Christian and I could think to do was flee, to sell out and leave. With our shared French heritage, we sought a quiet place by the sea in Brittany. Imagine our surprise to learn we were 50 years too late! The entire coast from one end of the region to the other was completely built up with one new house after another after another.

There was the unexpected benefit of a new perspective gained by looking back at our isolated mountain valley in rural Pennsylvania from an ocean and a continent away. After the whimsical nature of France (to put it mildly), we realized the Hermitage was our home. That, yes, it contained great pain, even terror, but it also contained unique beauty and a sense of belonging we knew could not be replaced. We had created the Hermitage as the equivalent of Edward Hicks' paintings of The Peaceable Kingdom. If we did not have lions laying down with lambs, we at least had

ducks, geese, replacement turkeys, and chickens, as well as barn cats, dogs, and the local flora and fauna. So here was our family, here was our calling, here was our destiny and not even a brutal act of terrorism would change that.

We began to make it our own in ways we had not before when we were trying to get brothers to join us. Christian had already retired from teaching and was basically working full time as a studio painter, finishing a new canvas every couple of months or so.

My project was to make sense of all the accumulated furniture, historic farm equipment, and tools we had collected when still expecting a monastic brotherhood. That was something we no longer wanted so we sold many items, gave other items away, and decided to turn the barn into a local history museum called the Mahantongo Heritage Center. It emphasizes the self-reliance of the Pennsylvania Germans who settled here and whose descendants influenced us to learn self-reliance as well. We arrived in the valley at a time when the older generation, those raised before World War II, had lived the way we lived, without utilities, farming with draft animals and constructing their own buildings. We personally knew many of the people whose handwork we had, such as quilts, rag rugs, even photographs and folk music performances. Modern farm families are so busy making a living in the valley that they don't have time to preserve their heritage, whereas we do. Indeed, we'd already been moving obsolete farm buildings to the Hermitage for years and adaptively reusing them. The Hermitage has become its own, living, open-air museum.

These projects revitalized us. We started working within the community again, especially after many neighbors stopped to say how appalled and sorry they were at the killing of our turkeys. We reinstated our annual open house which we had stopped in the 1990s. We also opened buildings that had been closed for years, like the letter press print shop, which basically had not been entered since our last newsletter more than a decade ago.

Next we decided to get some new publicity to mark our revitalization, so we sent an idea for an article to the *New York Times*, which picked up on the hook of "They built it: no one



Our beloved Bourbon Red and Royal Palm turkeys at the Hermitage.



came.” A very sympathetic staff writer came out to interview us and the resulting article was popular enough that we were deluged with emails and requests for visits and tours. We were the soup de jour and made the most of it. We quickly learned that different groups were interested in different aspects of the Hermitage: some wanted to focus on the collections, others on the buildings, and many simply wanted to meet us. A number of people wanted to create their own vision of a better, more meaningful life.

From these experiences, we realized we had downplayed our spirituality for the article, something we wanted to remedy. Indeed, at our recent open house, a man said he had last visited us “when you were still in your spiritual stage.” It was true that in our increasingly desperate attempts to gain members we made the Hermitage seem secular, which it wasn't at all. Now we entered our own restoration phase, clarifying our mission here and learning how to explain our mystical holy work.

We're even bringing back the wearing of robes for special occasions. We wore our own handmade robes when we first moved here, quickly becoming known as “the men who wear robes.” This caused no end of surprise and discussion among the locals, who only saw robes on Sundays in church when worn by the clergy, not on people working during the week. However the robes were not practical for daily farm and construction work and we quickly wore them out. Now, we realize that outward signs are sometimes important.

When we greet visitors, now I say, “Welcome to the Hermitage, where the planet is sacred and family.” Those few words convey the core, mystical belief that guides our lives here, that the earth and spirit can be unified and made whole by creating beauty and harmony between them. Though not Christian, we live at the end of Revelation, at the intersection of New Jerusalem, the spirit, and New Eden, the earth. Through such work, the earth is sacralized and the spirit incarnated.

One hoped-for result of the *Times* article was to locate a possible editor and publisher for our book about the Hermitage. We have worked on various versions for 15 years and thought we finally had it right. Not so, we learned, from an editor who understands the marketplace as we do not. So “hack and slash” is our new mantra and we'll see where it leads.

An unexpected result of the article was the interest of two filmmakers in possibly doing a documentary and a fictionalized version of our story. We figure one, both, or neither project may happen and I'm not good at holding my breath. In the meantime, there are birds and animals to feed, buildings and grounds to maintain, pictures to paint, books to edit, and lives to lead. We try to live in the moment, realizing that, as

When we greet visitors, now I say, “Welcome to the Hermitage, where the planet is sacred and family.”

we age, those moments are fewer now than they were. Gratifyingly, there are also people interested in seeing the work, and the Hermitage, continue. So stay tuned as I hope to return in three or four years with a new update. 🌱

Johannes Zinzendorf cofounded the Hermitage with Christian Zinzendorf in 1988. They have written and published a number of works using the community's letterpress print shop. They are also coauthors of The Big Book of Flax, published by Schiffer, and are editing their book on the story of the Hermitage for a prospective publisher.



A duck sits on the wall in front of the outhouse.

Bro. Christian holds a clutch of baby rabbits.



Johannes Zinzendorf

What I Miss about Findhorn

By *Graham Meltzer*

I have just returned to my community in Findhorn, Scotland, after six weeks away with family in Australia. I always find it valuable to get away from Findhorn for a period. It provides an opportunity to reflect on my life there and my reasons for remaining, given that it's on the opposite side of the world from family, which includes my aging mother whose health is not good, two daughters whom I adore and their beautiful families, as well as several siblings. My two grandchildren, Gus and Mattie, are two years and nine months old, respectively. Separation from family is the greatest challenge, indeed the only real challenge I face in living permanently in Scotland. In every other respect, I am deeply happy in the Findhorn Foundation and community and also as a Scottish and European resident.

Over the Christmas (2014) period I stayed with both my mother on Australia's Gold Coast, and my daughter Anna and her family, who were also hosting my other daughter, Liberty, and her family. They live about an hour's drive south in a beautiful rainforest setting near a town called Mullumbimby. It was a busy time for me, driving back and forth several times, living out of a suitcase, connecting and reconnecting. And whilst I was ostensibly on holiday, my various projects also required attention, sometimes for several hours a day. I did find time, however, to reflect upon and appreciate all of the gifts I have in my life at Findhorn. On one hand, I used the opportunity to step back and gain some objectivity and perspective. On the other, I couldn't help but feel deep love and appreciation for life in my adopted home. I found myself missing the community deeply. And here's why...

There are three main aspects that I most appreciate about my life in Findhorn: the people, the place, and the culture. By far the most important is the people, or more specifically, my relationships with them. The place and the culture, to my mind, provide the context for those relationships. The Findhorn community is estimated to have about 600 or 700 members, although nobody really knows exactly how many; we

have never conducted a census, as far as I know. I would have some form of relationship with only a small proportion of them: perhaps a little over 100, a figure approaching Dunbar's number. Dunbar is an anthropologist who argues, based on his research of primates, that the human brain can comfortably maintain only about 150 meaningful relationships.

Those 100-plus community members I know by name and I know something of their background and role in the community. But more importantly, and this is the defining characteristic of such relationships I would say, we have a "heart connection." This, for me, is what determines a significant or meaningful relationship. We have had at least one, probably several, heart to heart conversations. Every time we meet, we enjoy a lingering heartfelt hug and a meaningful exchange.

Because we're a geographically defined community, I meet some of these people several times every day, so opportunities for a meeting of hearts occur frequently—too often it feels at times when there's work to be done. This results in a deeply embodied experience of what I can only describe as a "field of love." It feels as if I'm immersed in a culture where love is freely, constantly, and generously expressed. The open-heartedness of my relationships with so many people is without doubt my primary motivation for living at Findhorn.

Such relationships have been formed over time and mostly as a result of the very many opportunities (formal and informal) for building this kind of relationship. I'm an introvert, so relationship building doesn't come naturally to me. Opportunities for deepening connection occur formally in all manner of courses, meetings, celebrations, and cultural events—in fact just about every time two or more gather together for some kind of purpose.

Gatherings of all kinds usually begin with an attunement, to bring people present and induce greater alignment of purpose. Then, we often proceed with an "ice-breaker" to help those participating loosen their defences and open their minds and hearts. These are playful activities that appeal to our inner child. Fun and laughter are excellent means of dissolving personal boundaries and enabling connection.

Depending on the nature of the gathering, further processes may be introduced to encourage a deeper experience and appreciation of "the other." Dancing, singing, and playing what we call Discovery Games are commonly used vehicles for deepening connection.



Community dancing during Summer Solstice celebration.

Cucumber harvest in one of Findhorn's poly tunnels.

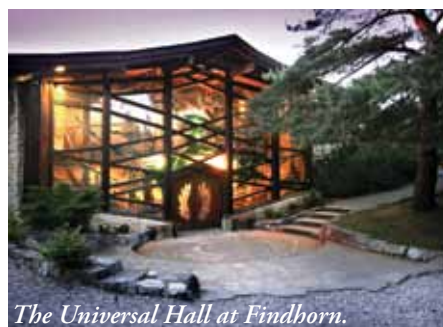


The Nature Sanctuary: a handmade Findhorn building.



Photos courtesy of Graham Meltzer

The house that Graham designed and built.



The Universal Hall at Findhorn.

We often include a “sharing” whereby participants express what is going on for them, outwardly or emotionally or both. Each person in turn takes a minute or two (often longer) to convey what’s currently going on in their “private” life. The rest of the group listens attentively—with empathy and without judgement. This is probably the most direct and powerful means we have of building love and acceptance within a group setting. In the process, growth, healing, and transformation commonly occur.

I have heard many a guest to Findhorn say after such an experience that they felt “heard” for the first time in their life. By this they mean far more than just being heard aurally. Rather, they have felt accepted and appreciated (loved, even) for who and what they are. This can be a primary catalyst for healing, which can also come to those who listen when they realise that they’re not alone in their innermost thoughts and feelings, that their issues are universally held by all of us. I personally believe in transparency for the sake of it. The more we humans can fully share with each other what is going on for us “privately,” then the greater can be our individual and collective healing and transformation.

Informal opportunities for deepening connection are also numerous. Because we live, work, and play together, we are constantly interacting in different settings, for a range of diverse purposes. We get to know each other in different guises. Our understanding of each other grows rich and our relationships become more authentic. It becomes impossible to “fake it.” So generally, people don’t bother; they are themselves. This is such a different way of being in the world to that which I experience elsewhere. Particularly in the conventional mainstream workplace, relationships are built around hierarchical roles and responsibilities. In the absence of awareness, they are likely to become fixed and immutable, with little opportunity for deepening. I see friends in the city meeting by appointment for a single prescribed activity. Even when they meet for recreation, their interaction is circumscribed by activity and lifestyle. Certainly this is the case in Australia. When “the boys” enjoy a round of golf together, or families a picnic, they will typically spend precious little time consciously deepening their connection.

As mentioned, other aspects of my life in
(continued on p. 78)

How Sharing Food Builds Community in Silicon Valley

By Peter Ruddock

I hadn't attended the Garden Share at Full Circle Farm in Sunnyvale (California) for a while. A number of moves had decimated my garden, which was down to a few containers of radishes and greens, none of them ready on this winter Sunday. But since I was going to be in the area, I decided I would drop by and at least say hello to a few friends I suspected would be there. I knew I would be welcome, but the reception I got surprised me nonetheless. I was the prodigal son, returned home. I was, I was told, welcome, just so that I could share myself, and perhaps some stories. And by the way, I had to take a fig cutting—Chris and Edith had pruned their tree and done so in such a way that they could share the cuttings, with instructions on how to care for them and stories of their provenance. I'm not a great fan of figs, but how could I say no? I now have a pot with a stick in it, which may not survive, and if it does will produce fruit that I won't be thrilled to eat; I now have a pot that makes me smile, because it contains a story, of how a community that I helped start has continued to flourish.

In the summer of 2010 I was looking for a community project to be part of a national day of service. Inspired by the Produce Swap of Transition Albany, I thought that we could use something similar at our end of the Bay. It was easy enough to create a single event: a tent, tables, a couple of posters, and a little promotion encouraging people to come out and bring the bounty of their gardens. Our great local gardening institution, Common Ground, graciously offered to be our host. And we got quite a good turnout. I knew it would be much harder to keep them coming out. And it was. While attendance at our kick-off event was a respectable 25 people, the next event attracted perhaps five. We weren't organized, our original sponsor lost interest, we didn't have a regular schedule, and we hadn't made things clear to our neighbors about what we were doing. But we had perseverance.

About two years previously, my friend

Victoria Armigo had founded Transition Silicon Valley, which in turn had spawned Transition Palo Alto. Our local Transition chapters would love to sponsor a recurring event. But Victoria had an idea, in part inspired by Transition and in part by a concern that "swapping" produce was strictly a taxable activity and she wanted to avoid money. She proposed that we modify our rules a little bit and that we "share" our produce. Those who showed up would put their contributions on a table, chat with their neighbors about what they were growing and why, and about any other things as well, and then take something on their way out after about an hour. No counting please. Over the long run give and take would be expected to average out. This confused some people, but appealed to many others. Suddenly our gathering was at least as much about getting to know our neighbors as it was about getting produce for produce. Attendance started to creep up. The regular Garden Share was born.

In subsequent years Transition Palo Alto spawned three monthly Garden Shares: the one in Palo Alto has moved to the community center, after the closure of Common Ground after 43 years; we hold one at Full Circle Farm in Sunnyvale, in their CSA stand; and we hold one in Portola Valley at Town Hall. In addition, once every quarter, the Palo Alto Garden Share becomes the Share Faire, where produce is complemented with crafts and books, clothes and music, toys and skill shares, where our neighbors teach each other how to perform skills which they might otherwise have to hire someone to do. We get 75 to 100 people for Share Faires. After four-and-a-half years, we have created an institution.

But the Garden Shares and Share Faires do not stand alone in our community. Local food plays a big part. Our sponsor Full Circle Farm is an educational farm, built on unused land at the back of a middle school. Some of our neighbors subscribe to their CSA; many of us volunteer at the garden; Victoria acts as their treasurer; Transition Palo Alto



Sourdough Starter.



will staff a table at their upcoming Earth Day Fair.

Transition Palo Alto in turn spawned a Slow Money group. Slow Money creates opportunities for its members to invest in local businesses, especially in food, fiber, and farms. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) rules make it hard for small businesses to solicit for investment. It does leave a loophole: a small business can ask its friends for loans and other investment. And so our Slow Money group reaches out to our local food businesses and asks them to get to know us, letting them know that we might be able to invest in them, if they have become our friends. We meet monthly over snacks. We meet yearly at a local farm, where we hold a Farm Fest. In 2014, Full Circle Farm hosted Farm Fest, which attracted over 100 people to meet about a dozen local food businesses, a few of which have received investments from friends made at Slow Money events.

Victoria and I, and our friends Debbie and Mary Ann, have invested in Fiesta Farm, a local farm specializing in chickens, eggs, and pork. Sarah and her husband Aurelio run the farm and operate booths at local farmers' markets, including the Sunnyvale Farmers' Market, where they met Victoria. Being community-minded they have also reached out to community groups, including our Slow Food chapter, where they supplied chickens to a farm-to-table dinner, where they met me. When they needed a loan, they were able to reach out to us as friends, and we were able to introduce them to others, who once they had become friends could legally loan them money. The loans aren't for large amounts, but they have helped Fiesta Farm expand. The lenders do get modest interest, but more than that we get stories of Fiesta Farm, photos of Sarah and Aurelio's new baby Mateo, and a real sense of connection to this wonderful local business.

Victoria raises chickens in her back yard. She shares the eggs at Garden Shares. She loves her "girls." When one of her girls stopped laying, as chickens will do when they get older, Victoria knew that she had to let her go somehow. But she had to do so with respect. She decided that she would like to butcher the chicken herself, with great care and honor for the life it had given to her. Not knowing how to do that, Victoria reached out to Sarah one Saturday at the market and asked for help. Sarah was glad to teach Victoria the art of humane butchering. And so one weekend, Victoria, a notorious softie, and some friends, held a small ceremony honoring her chicken, butchered it, and cooked a special meal. I wasn't able to attend, but I have to imagine that a tear or two was shed during the process.

If you try to draw a diagram of the interactions mentioned above, you'll quickly create a mess of criss-crossing lines. You'll find multiple overlapping relationships. And interdepen-

dencies. And all of them stem from the establishment of a series of events, beginning with the little Garden Share in Palo Alto in 2010; a series of events which its regular attendees, many of whom don't know this story, could not imagine missing. These events have become their own self-sustaining ecosystem, not unlike the permaculture concept of the "food forest," which once established no longer needs regular planning. These events have helped solidify a strong local community at the south end of the San Francisco Bay. 🐦

Peter Ruddock is a sustainable food advocate and small business consultant. He is working toward creating a more sustainable world, by changing the way we interact with our environment and with each other. He concentrates on food systems change, because given that everyone eats, everyone should be able to relate to a healthier, more sustainable food system. He believes that there are four areas where he can best work on fostering this change: educating people about sustainability; creating a resilient local economy; creating vibrant local communities; and changing policies to foster such changes. He is active in a number of grassroots nonprofits to help accomplish these goals: Slow Food, Slow Money, Transition Palo Alto, the San Mateo County Food System Alliance, and the California Food Policy Council.



Goods Share.



Bike repair.



Garden Share.

Peter Ruddock

HOW TO Live Together in Harmony

By Cedar Rose Selenite

I have to admit something about myself and it's very painful. For most of my adult life, I have not kept a clean house.

Sure, I can blame it on having three children close together in age, homeschooling them, often having several projects going on at a time that do not allow time for housekeeping...

But the truth is, there are dishes in the sink, sometimes even food left out on the counter.

Recently, I invited someone to live with me and my children with the intention of starting a small intentional community based in Nonviolent Communication. We are thinking of calling our house the Harmony Homestead. We shall call this person Joann. Joann has added such positivity and spiritual companionship to my life. She began helping around the house above and beyond what I would have expected. She could tell I was overwhelmed and struggling with so much on my plate.

But several weeks in, she sat me down to have a talk. I'm imagining it was difficult for her. I know it was intensely painful for me. "Cedar, there are ants in the kitchen, and food left out, and dishes in the sink. The yard needs work. I know you are a good, wonderful mother, but something's got to change around here! It's neglectful!"

I reflected back her concerns, said I understood, and wanted us to work together. But inside I was torn up. Time to face the reality of feedback. If I wanted to live with Joann, I would need to work with her and change my ways.

I tell this story because it really highlights what it takes to live in harmony together. **Joann was brave, honest, and willing to work together.** I was open to hearing feedback, and willing to find strategies to meet both of our needs.

There are five skills I believe we can learn and practice that make it more possible to live together in harmony, whether it's in a family, a roommate situation, an intentional community, or a working group.

1 Listen with curiosity. Take a deep breath, and breathe it out. Let go of all your own thoughts for just a moment. Hear what the other person is saying and be present. Guess at what the person is feeling and what is most important to them. Reflect back what you are hearing them say. This de-escalates tension, and helps the other person trust that what is going on with them is important to you. It also puts you into a more grounded state.

2 Share your needs too. Check in with yourself. Your needs are important too. To live together in harmony, everyone's needs need to be on the table. Solutions can come from looking at everyone's needs together.

3 Remember that relationships are nurtured by positivity. If you notice that you are giving and/or receiving mostly negative feedback, you will need to turn it around. Think of several things you are thankful for about the relationship or situation. Share these appreciations regularly. Relationship expert John Gottman recommends a ratio of five positive interactions for every one challenging interaction in order for a relationship to thrive.

4 Give your feedback carefully. In order for the other person or for your group to take in challenging feedback, you will need to remove blame from it. Use I-statements, state how you feel, and use no judgments. In order to get your concern across, say why it is important to you.

5 Be willing to collaborate. There are limits to getting people to do what we want them to by means of coercion or fear. When we do that we lose trust, and in some ways we lose the relationship. When we share power and collaborate, and when we are willing to hear what is most important to the other, we retain the relationship, the trust, and foster positivity and goodwill.

Things are looking up at Harmony Homestead. We've had a clean kitchen free of ants for weeks. I'm hopeful and grateful for having Joann in my life. 🌿

Cedar Rose Selenite teaches Nonviolent Communication and offers communication coaching and relationship healing mediations via skype. She is also an empathizer on EmpathyApp.com. Visit universalhumaneeds.org for more information on her offerings, and for more articles. She also offers a weekend workshop for intentional communities on how to live together in harmony. Email universalhumaneeds@yahoo.com to invite her to your community.

Sociocracy, Feelings, and Emotions

By Jock Millenson

A few weeks ago I found myself returning to my seasonal eco-community in Greece for the 13th year, about to dig and plant one of our vegetable beds which had lain covered and dormant all winter.

After uncovering the straw and cardboard mulch laid down last autumn to keep the weeds from overwhelming the bed during our seven-month absence, and before starting to work, I took a few moments to sit next to this 25 x 6-foot bed to “attune” to it. I let the warm May sun, the smell of last year’s compost mixed with that of newly cut grass, and the fragrance of wild mountain herbs mingle with the sight of the rich brown clods of fertile Greek soil and the songs of the birds. As I sat there on a stump, my wellies in contact with the soil, I invited thoughts about what might grow best in this bed and reminded myself of what we had planted there in previous years and how the bed had fared last summer.

After a few contemplative moments, I got up and selected my trusty Smith and Hawken four-tined stainless steel fork and began digging. Although this bed has been “improved” every year since we first dug it in 2012, I still found a few large rocks to remove and many clods of earth that needed breaking up with the fork so that any seeds sown directly would not be prevented from germinating and reaching the light.

Eventually I was satisfied that the bed was nearly ready, set down the fork, and fetched a rake to smooth over the bed and ready it for the corn seeds and cucumber seedlings that I had decided to plant.

Now as I write this it is early July and the corn stalks are up about a foot and the cucumbers already have started twisting around them and I can see a few immature cukes already on the vines. If all goes well, in a few weeks we will be eating cucumbers and corn cobs.

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You might be wondering why I’ve started this piece on Sociocracy and feelings by writing about gardening. It is because I see a close analogy. In Laird Schaub’s article “Further Reflections on Sociocracy” (COMMUNITIES #165), he expresses his concern that Sociocracy fails to deal with the emotional and feeling aspects of community process. In this article I will not be considering all of Laird’s points, only the two that I have the most personal experience with: #4, the difference between formal consensus (C.T. Butler and Amy Rothstein, 1987) and consent, and #1, how to deal with feelings in decision-making situations.

For the past 13 years I have lived nearly every summer in an intentional community in Pelion, Greece consisting of some six to 10 ever-changing members and coworkers whose stated mission is to demonstrate the value of authentic community as a vehicle for teaching and researching holistic education through a living-learning environment.

Ever since we at this community, called Kalikalos, were introduced to Sociocracy by the late Emile van Dantzig in 2010, we have used some of the principles of Dynamic Governance in our decision making. However, because we are a small group of never more than a dozen people, we do not make use of the full suite of Sociocratic tools. For instance, although we do have some small sub-committees—the six managers of our three campuses, the boards of directors of the two nonprofit companies that run our three

campuses, and various ad hoc committees (e.g., the two people currently looking into the construction of a solar shower at Kissos Centre and the three people who are doing social media)—we have never seen a need for double-linked circles.

Similarly, we do not use the Sociocratic guidelines for selecting managerial (focalising) roles for people. These seem to emerge organically out of our everyday interactions and the degree of commitment and leadership people are willing to take on. Nor do we use the formal rounds in evaluating proposals. Because our circles are quite small (six to 11 people typically) we accomplish the same ends by free-form discussions with our daily morning meetings always held (facilitated) by one person whose job it is to keep us on track and to remind us of time constraints. As we are a working community servicing workshops, we cannot spend the entire morning in a meeting; our guests are expecting lunch, the fruit and vegetable seller arrives at noon, the plumber or electrician may also be waiting for us at 11 am, and callers expect to find the office functioning in the morning.

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We use Sociocracy primarily to guide our decision making. Without going through the formal process of picture forming, making a proposal, inviting a reaction



round, adjusting the proposal for objections, etc., we mix it all up together. Most of the time this is a free-for-all. If the facilitator decides that the discussion is getting out of hand and straying from the issue, or sees that one or two people are dominating the discussion and others are not speaking, she (and we are about 70 percent women) brings out the talking stick and turns the discussion into controlled rounds.

Little by little the issue either becomes clarified and the proposal sculpted so that the facilitator invites the group for a consent round; or the group has such wide views on the issue that it's clear no proposal at this stage is likely to receive general support. It is then referred back to a small subgroup of two or three members, self-selected from the most disparate opposing viewpoints, to come back to the next meeting hopefully with a synthesis.

Alternatively, if a coherent proposal has emerged that appears to have the general support of most of the group, the facilitator calls for a consent round. This is very simple: either the facilitator or the original proposer reads out or says the proposal as precisely as possible. Those of us who have no paramount objection to it put our right thumb up, those who aren't sure or need more information put their thumb horizontal, and anyone who has a paramount objection puts their thumb down.

Those who require more information are asked what isn't clear and the proposer or any other member endeavors to provide sufficient additional information to allow the person to either go thumb up or thumb down. Frequently the very process of providing more information results in a modification or refinement to the proposal. We may then try another consent round which may or may not result in all thumbs up and if so the proposal is immediately written down in our agreements book, the wording checked with everyone, and an agreed time for re-evaluation is noted in the agreements book.

Suppose one or more persons still voice paramount objections. Such an objection means either: (1) the member believes that the proposal violates the mission of the community; (2) that it is likely to have consequences that will violate the community's mission, or which will be undesirable for the group; or (3) that the dissenting member thinks there is a better way to achieve the same end.

Whenever there remain people with

thumbs down, the facilitator reminds the group that they are not being asked if they agree with the proposal. They are being asked if they can "live with it," or if it is "good enough to try"; it will always have a time limit as to when it must be brought back to the circle to be re-evaluated.

This simple reminder constitutes the core difference between formal consensus and Sociocratic consent and why we prefer the latter. We do not require agreement from everyone in the circle, we merely require that they can live with the proposal and allow us to try it out. This subtle but crucial difference between formal consensus and Sociocratic consent is what prevents our group from being held hostage by one or two members who cannot agree with it. Many equalitarian communities have found that attempting to achieve consensus agreements can create such lengthy processes that people lose energy and may eventually drop out altogether.

Although Sociocratic consent differs subtly from formal consensus, I agree with Laird that consent is a variation of consensus. In our Articles of Incorporation we hold consensus to be a fundamental spiritual principle, a core value of our community, and the basis for all our decisions.

What does a group do if there is one person consistently objecting to nearly every proposal put forth, arguing that in their view of the mission all these proposals violate it, hence their paramount objections are fully valid and must be respected? I cannot agree with Diana Leafe Christian (COMMUNITIES #165, page 62) that the group is then empowered to bypass the objection and pass the proposal anyway. This undermines the very principle of consensus which we at Kalikalos hold to be a central core value of our community.

First of all, let's affirm that the lone consistent dissenter might be right! (Remember the film "12 Angry Men.") The objections must be considered. However, very often such consistent blocking of proposals is a reflection of a quarrel with the leadership—either a personal one, or a clash of values. If the latter, the group can endeavor to clarify its mission and vision, to make it more clear to itself and to its members. (This exercise is one we at Kalikalos have been carrying out this summer, so that we all know to what we are subscribing and potential new members know what they are joining. We've arrived at this: "Exploring the value of authentic community as a vehicle for teaching and researching holistic education within a living-learning environment.")

On the other hand, if the blocker is engaged in a personal struggle with the leadership



Morning attunement.

(the core group in our case) then a process of last resort is a proposal to remove that member from the group. This is the only proposal in which the member has no power to block. Asking a member to leave is a drastic step, one which is at odds with our aim to be as inclusive as possible, but we have over the 13 year history of the project invoked it three or four times. Whenever there is a clash of our own paramount values (say, inclusivity vs. the ability to function and carry out the mission) one is obliged to prioritize. Power struggles do occur in communities and even with the best communication tools they can be very unpleasant. Their resolution can frequently be acrimonious, leaving in its wake damaged egos and hurt feelings which only time can heal. In the final analysis we are obliged to refer to the common good.

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Now let me turn to Laird's first concern, that Sociocracy offers no place for processing feelings and emotions. I agree, it does not. However, we do not rely on Sociocracy to help us with emotional issues. This is where my garden analogy is useful.

I do not use a rake to dig the soil, I use a fork. The rake will be useful only after I've dug the soil and gotten out the rocks and



broken up the clods. So too with meetings. We would not dream of starting a morning circle with decision making. First we take a few minutes of silent attunement (meditation) to bring us into presence—the place where we are all one. (This is the social equivalent of what I did by sitting quietly by my vegetable bed before getting up to dig it.) After that, we use the talking stick to go 'round (usually more than once) to hear how each member of the community is feeling now. Issues may arise, there may be conflicts between members, there could be held resentments; these all have to come out, be heard, and the co-intelligence of the group is needed so that everyone can see the big picture. Many conflicts and resentments have their roots in poor or inadequate communication. Whenever one party sees a situation in one way and another person sees it totally differently, these disparate viewpoints must come to the surface and be made transparent for the whole group so that the protagonists can see each other's viewpoints and hear what other group members who are not involved think. We would not dream of going on to the decision-making portion of our daily meeting until we had thoroughly processed the feelings and emotions that are in the group.

It is only when these have been thoroughly processed that we are ready to talk ideas and make decisions. In the emotional sharing portion of our meetings (which can take anywhere from 10 minutes to two hours) the process is controlled by the talking stick with strict guidelines: the talking stick confers the power of speech; speak deep, brief, and from the heart in "I" statements; talk about people who are present in the circle; don't talk about "we"; don't give a philosophical lecture; don't formulate proposals; don't use "you" in speaking to a person in the circle, instead use their name and speak to the group at large or to the centre of the circle, which has a lighted candle and usually a bowl of fresh flowers.

Just as we would not begin to rake our garden bed until we had dug it fully, we do not turn our tripartite morning meeting to "business" (decision making; both evaluating previous decisions and making new ones) until we have fully dug up and processed all the emotional clods and feeling rocks that exist.

Notice that I said "processed." I did not say "resolved." Emotional issues sometimes arise from personality clashes that can recur time and time again in a group with a common vision. I have lived on and off for many years in the Findhorn ecovillage in Scotland and one of the things I had to learn early there was how to live and work with people who shared my values and vision of a new world of peace and partnership, but with whom I would not in the natural course of life become friends. This is a learning; it requires flexibility and tolerance. Even in a small community of a dozen members one may not like everyone, but we are joined together to help build a new world. To do so we have to learn to work with others with personalities very different from our own.

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In conclusion, elements of Sociocracy seem to us at Kalikalos to be extremely helpful in making community decisions both easier and quicker. At the same time, as Laird emphasizes, other tools (ZEGG Forum, psychodrama, fishbowls, Scott Peck community building, creative writing, meditation, and more) are available to work through feelings and emotions. At every Kalikalos meeting we make a place for both decision making and processing feelings, but we try not to do them both simultaneously. This is not to say that strong feelings may not come up in the decision-making portion of a meeting, and conversely people will get ideas during the emotional sharing rounds. Human interactions are messy; they cannot be boxed in so neatly. Nonetheless, establishing one time and place where emotional issues take priority and the group's intention is on them, and another time and place where decision making has the priority and intention, has proved a valuable method of giving both these key aspects of community living the respect they deserve. 🐦

*Jock Millenson is an associate member at large of the Findhorn ecovillage in northern Scotland, a cofounder of the Kalikalos Holistic Network in Pelion, Greece, and the author of *Liberating Love* (1995), the first book in English about the ZEGG Forum process.*

RESOURCE:

C. T. Butler and Amy Rothstein, *On Conflict and Consensus: A Handbook on Formal Consensus Decisionmaking* (Portland, Maine: Food Not Bombs Publishing, 1987).

The Six Steps of Proposal-Forming in Sociocracy

By Diana Leafé Christian

Editor's Note: The following is an abridged version of a longer article on Sociocracy's Proposal-Forming process, forming part VI in the author's "How Sociocracy Can Help Communities" series. For specifics of each step and tips on how to implement it in your group, email the author at diana@ic.org.

The six steps of proposal-forming in Sociocracy (a.k.a. Dynamic Governance) can be used independently by a community even if it doesn't use the rest of Sociocracy. Proposals can be either considered immediately or saved for another meeting to decide. They can be also proposed to other circles or subgroups within the community to decide.

Here are the steps:

One: Present the Problem.

A circle makes a proposal to solve a problem or benefit from an opportunity, relative to its specific aims or objectives.

Let's say a Community Life circle, with the aims to provide enjoyable community-building events and services, takes on the problem that their community doesn't have a library. Someone presents the problem: "No community library," and writes "Library" in large letters at the top of a flip chart.

Two: Identify Aspects of the Problem ("Picture Forming").

The facilitator asks circle members to suggest various aspects—facets, characteristics, attributes—of the problem.

These are not specific proposal ideas, which come later in Step Four, but large, overarching categories that describe the problem. Identifying aspects of the problem first—"picture forming"—will help circle members create a more thorough proposal.

For example, if a circle is considering the lack of a library, various aspects of the problem could include "LOCATION," "LIBRARY MATERIALS TO LOAN OUT," and "SHELVING MATERIALS."

As in classic brainstorming, people don't criticize, praise, or otherwise comment on other people's suggestions. They can suggest more than one aspect of the proposal at a time. They can also pass, as they'll have other opportunities to offer suggestions as the facilitator keeps going around the circle.

Step Two is complete when no one has any more aspects of the problem to suggest.

Three: Consent to Completeness of the List.

Next is a consent round in which circle members are asked to consent to whether the listed "Aspects of the Problem" seem thorough and complete.

This step basically asks, "Have we thought of everything we'll need to thoroughly address the problem and not omit anything important?" Consenting to the completeness of the list is simply a consent round like those in the Consent Decision-Making process,

but people say "Complete" or "Incomplete" instead of "No objection" or "Objection."

Saying "Incomplete" means the person has thought of another aspect of the problem, and then they state the aspect they've just thought of.

This step is finished when after several rounds no one says "Incomplete" anymore and there are no more suggested aspects of the problem.

Step Four: List Specific Proposal Ideas.

The purpose of this step is to collect one or more specific proposal ideas to address each of the already-generated aspects of the problem. These are not whole proposals but small, discrete parts of a proposal.

(4a) Generate proposal ideas in rounds. Circle members post the flip chart pages listing aspects of the problem on a wall where everyone can see them.

Some proposal ideas will be criteria for measuring and evaluating how well the library is functioning after it's built and dates of specific upcoming meetings in which these evaluations will take place—the "feedback loop" part of Sociocracy.

Different proposal ideas can also contradict each other, which is fine.

(4b) Include at least one specific proposal idea for each aspect of the problem. One way to do this is by comparing the listed "Aspects of the Problem" to the listed "Specific Proposal Ideas," and checking off each aspect of the problem for each proposal idea that addresses it. For example, next to the aspect, "LIBRARY MATERIALS TO LOAN OUT," the scribe could make three check marks,



Participants at a Sociocracy workshop in Montreal play in a skit to learn Proposal-Forming, 2014.

one each for “Books,” “CDs and audiotapes,” and “DVDs.”

Once every aspect of the problem has been checked off and no more ideas are suggested, the circle does a consent round to make sure each aspect of the problem is addressed by one or more proposal ideas.

Circle members will have at least three additional opportunities to add proposal ideas or otherwise modify the proposal: (1) next, in Step Five of the proposal-forming process, (2) in Consent Decision-Making when they’re deciding the proposal, and (3) each time the circle evaluates the proposal after it’s been implemented.

Five: Organize Specific Proposal Ideas.

(5a) Select “tuners.” These are circle members who write the first draft of the proposal. Tuners can be the whole circle, two or three circle members, or just the facilitator, depending on how complex the problem is and how the circle wants to do it.

If it’s two or three circle members, they can be selected informally in a variety of ways, including “volunteering with consent.” For example, if someone says, “I’d like to do this and I’d like Fred to work with me,” this is a proposal. So the facilitator does a round to check for consent.

John Buck, coauthor of the Sociocracy book *We the People*, suggests that one of the best uses of a whole-community meeting is to use the proposal-forming process for controversial or complex topics, like a pet policy. If this is the case he recommends selecting tuners through Sociocracy’s “Selecting People for Roles” (elections) process (*described in next article in the series*) because with controversial proposals some members may feel suspicious of whoever might be in the role of tuners unless they can consent to those who will fill this role.

(5b) Tuners shape proposal ideas into one or more draft proposals. Using the lists generated earlier, the tuners organize the specific proposal ideas into a draft proposal. If the issue is complex this could be several related draft proposals.

For a relatively simple proposal they might do this during a break in the meeting. For a more complex proposal or set of proposals they could do it in a later and bring their draft proposal(s) to the next meeting.

As noted earlier, proposal ideas can contradict each other, such as suggestions for different locations of the library (including when half the community might prefer one location and half the other).

John Buck recommends two different ways for handling contradictory proposal ideas:

- (1) Just pick one of the contradictory proposal ideas, or
- (2) Include both or all of them.

In either case, any part of the proposal, including contradictory parts, can be addressed later by objecting during a consent round when the proposal is being decided, and ideally by also participating in finding a way to resolve the objection.

(5c) Tuners share the draft proposal(s) with other circle members. The tuners share the draft proposal(s) with the circle.

Six: Consent Round—Does the draft proposal (or set of related proposals) address all identified aspects of the problem?

Next is a consent round to make sure the draft proposal includes at least one and ideally several proposal ideas that address each aspect of the problem. The facilitator might ask, “Any objections to the proposal as complete enough to address all aspects the problem?”

People *don’t* say “Objection” if they personally would not consent to the proposal as it is currently written, or if they want to add an idea they especially liked that the tuners didn’t include. Rather, they would simply object in a consent round later.

Similarly, they don’t say “Objection” if they suddenly want to add a whole new proposal idea, *unless* it seems as if the proposal would not serve their circle’s aims unless the new proposal idea were added. In that case the circle would then propose the new idea and do a consent round. If they consented, they would add it.

When after several rounds everyone says “No Objection” and no one says “Objection,” this means the draft proposal has been consented to. It is no longer a draft; it is now a finished proposal.

Circle members have not consented to the proposal itself. They’ve simply finished the sixth and last step in the Proposal-Forming process. Now they’re ready to either decide the proposal or save it for a future meeting. 🍷

Diana Leaf Christian, author of Creating a Life Together and Finding Community, speaks at conferences, offers consultations, and leads workshops internationally. She specializes in teaching Sociocracy to communities and has taught in North America, Europe, and Latin America. She is currently teaching for the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) in an online course. (Each weekly session is posted on youtube.) This article series is part of Diana’s forthcoming booklet on using Sociocracy in intentional communities.

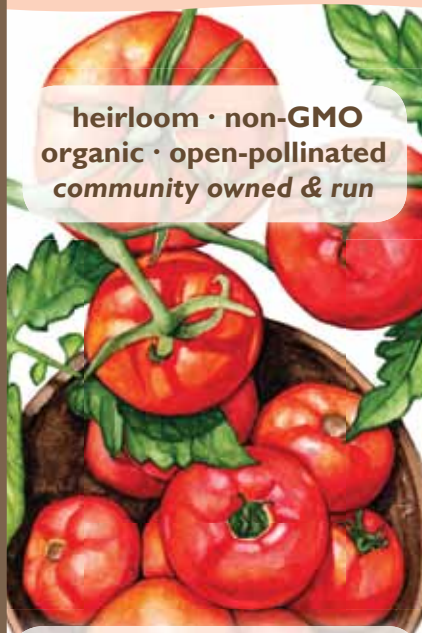


Participants at a Sociocracy workshop at Aldeafeliz Ecovillage in Colombia practice Proposal-Forming, 2014.

Diana Leaf Christian

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Acorn Community celebrates our 22nd anniversary this year. Prospective members and interns are welcome to write to us to request to visit, especially during the summer months.

AcornCommunity.org



REACH

REACH is our column for all your Classified needs. In addition to ads intended to match people looking for communities with communities looking for people, Reach offers ads for events, goods, services, books, personals, and more to people interested in communities.

You may contact the Advertising Manager Christopher Kindig to place a Reach ad. Email Ads@ic.org, call 443-422-3741, or go to communities.ic.org/ads/ for more details or to submit your ad online.

THE REACH DEADLINE FOR ISSUE #170 - Spring 2016 (out in March) is January 24, 2016.

The rate for Reach ads is Up to 50 Words: \$25/issue or \$75/year; Up to 125 Words: \$40/issue or \$125/year; Up to 350 Words: \$60/issue or \$175/year If you are an FIC Member you may take off an additional 5%.

You may pay using a card or paypal by contacting Christopher online or over the phone using the contact information above, or you may mail a check or money order payable to COMMUNITIES with your ad text, word count, and duration of the ad, plus your contact information, to: The Fellowship for Intentional Community, 23 Dancing Rabbit Ln, Rutledge, MO 63563.

Intentional communities listing in the Reach section are also invited to create a free listing in the online Communities Directory at Directory.ic.org, and also to try our online classified advertising options. Special prices may be available to those who wish to list both in the magazine and online.

COMMUNITIES WITH OPENINGS

SMALL COMMUNITY AND HEALTHY LIVING CENTER ON 5 GORGEOUS ACRES WITH ORGANIC GARDENS, 30' yurt and large home seeking committed house-and-land-mates to help develop. The yurt is in use now for yoga classes, retreats, drumming, chanting, dancing. Healers, gardeners and those wanting to live in health and love are welcome! Ann Arbor, MI. Contact: EllenLivingston.com or 734-645-3217.

WIND SPIRIT COMMUNITY, A 20 YEAR-OLD OASIS AND COMMUNITY IN THE ARIZONA DESERT, has openings for 4 additional residents. On our 16 acres we have a year-round growing season, thousands of fruit, nut and native trees, six organic gardens, and abundant and high-quality water. Our residents enjoy a simple lifestyle surrounded by nature. We are joined by dozens to hundreds of visitors from around the country and world each year who bring stories, new perspectives, talents, energy and income to the community during their visits. We encourage new potential residents to view our website, arrange with us for a visit, work with the current residents on projects and enjoy the Land here. They are welcome to stay in Wind Spirit accommodations (converted buses and RVs, camping or the occasional available dome) or bring their own. More details can be found on the Wind Spirit visitor page at <http://www.windspiritcommunity.org/Visitors.htm>.

CITE ECOLOGIQUE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE IS LOCATED IN COLEBROOK IN THE GREAT NORTH WOOD REGION. We live cooperatively on 325 acres of land where we grow organic food and practice permaculture principles. Our mission is to give priority to education and sustainable development based on respect for all living things. We aim to share through education and positive network. 2 hr Tours are available from May to October - Wednesdays or Sundays for \$15. Also available: Weekends on Wellness, Community Living or Organic Farming; fees \$150 all-inclusive. Participate in our "Green Wednesday Seminars" and deepen your knowledge on Conflict resolution, Healthy cooking, Solar Energy, Holistic Education or How to grow Shiitake! Fees are \$45 including lunch. Experience an Internship on our farm. PDC: We will have a two-week Permaculture Design Certificate, August 17-30 - Early bird registration \$720 June 30 / Full price \$950 - www.citec.org - Leonie Brien (603)-331-1669 - info@citeecologiquenh.org - www.citeecologiquenh.org

HARBIN HOT SPRINGS INVITES YOU TO APPLY TO BECOME A PART OF OUR COMMUNITY OF FRIENDLY, HARD-WORKING, AND CREATIVE RESIDENTS. We are an eclectic collection of individuals who dedicate ourselves to the operation of our heart-conscious spiritual retreat center and the stewardship of nearly 14,000 acres of wild and beautiful land. Our non-

profit based community and retreat center seeks to interview potential candidates to live and work in our unique and beautiful holistic environment. Our facility attracts visitors from all over the world who are interested in the restorative effects of our natural spring waters, our gifted massage staff and varied workshops. We are looking to meet individuals who believe they can thrive in this dynamic yet gentle atmosphere. To apply please visit our application/employment page: www.harbin.org/community/employment/. For further information contact Human Resources, 707 987 2994 ext 128 - hr@harbin.org

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY LIFE? Consider Triform Camphill community - we are "work based" intentional community with "spiritual" background. We are actively seeking mature coworkers, volunteers and interns with enthusiasm, patience and interest in working with special needs youth. We offer diverse work areas like farming, gardening, cooking, music, weavery, pottery, crafts etc. We look forward to hearing from you! WWW.TRIFORM.ORG/ volunteer@triform.org/ 518-851-9320

VALVERDE COMMONS, A SENIOR COHOUSING COMMUNITY IN BEAUTIFUL AND ARTY TAOS, NM, HAS EIGHT LOTS STILL AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE. Located in a pastoral setting, it is walking distance to the library, shopping and the famous Taos Plaza. We have a stunning commons/meeting hall where classes, book club, meetings and potlucks are held regularly, and a barn which stores our gardening equipment and tools and has a workshop for ceramics and woodworking. We boast soaring views of Taos Mountain from our homes and common buildings. - Our town is small and charming, nestled in the Sange de Cristo mountains, and only an hour and a half from Santa Fe. We don't have big box stores but we do have 7 museums, countless galleries and a rich cultural life. We even have a brand of the University of NM where seniors can take courses for a pittance. - Singles and couples have built sustainable houses of all sizes from 750 sf to over 2,000, and we will assist new members in building their dreamhouses. Visit our website at www.valverdecommons.com, and plan to visit our community. Email us at valverdecommons@aol.com or call Carolyn Schlam at 575-751-3751 for further information. Join Us!

HEATHCOTE COMMUNITY, FREELAND, MARYLAND. We are an intentional community living cooperatively on 44 acres of land held in trust with School of Living. We have a permaculture farm and demonstration site. Our mission is to live sustainably and share with others through education and service. Heathcote was one of the first "hippie communes" and we are celebrating our 50th Anniversary in 2015! We are seeking new members who want to live cooperatively, engage in permaculture and sustainable farming, and contribute to our educational work. We have rooms available in shared houses

and one more building site available for a new residence. We also seek participants for our education programs, which include Visitor Days, workshops, and internships in farming and carpentry. For details see www.heathcote.org. Contact: 410-357-9523; info@heathcote.org.

BOULDER, COLORADO MORE AFFORDABLE, URBAN "CO-HOUSEHOLDING" OPTION: Boulder Creek Community is offering rent (\$600 to \$900/month per bedroom, starting 8/1/15) and/or rent-to-buy, shared living opportunities in our Common House for: community-focused persons, families or couples looking for short or long term community housing. We are inviting self-aware, heart-centered, service-oriented community members. Being located next to an exceptional Health Club, to Boulder Creek bike/hike path, parks, 2 universities, on-site car-share and bus options, frees community members to enjoy a better quality of life exploration... in community with others. See BoulderCreekCommunity.com or call Greg at 303-417-1690

FAIR OAKS ECOHOUSING, EAST OF SACRAMENTO, CA - Fair Oaks EcoHousing is a family-friendly, intergenerational group of households committed to creating an earth-friendly cohousing community. We're building 30 homes on 3.5 acres, with start of construction planned for fall 2015. We're seeking others who share our vision to join us! We're pleased to be working with Charles Durrett of McCamant & Durrett Architects and Katie McCamant of CoHousing Solutions, both leaders in environmental sustainability. Fair Oaks is 18 miles east of downtown Sacramento. The site is within easy walking distance of the 23-mile American River Parkway, deemed the "Jewel of Sacramento." Nearby attractions include charming Fair Oaks Village, the Sacramento Waldorf School and Bannister Park. Being located on the eastern side of the valley provides access to the Sierra Foothills, with opportunities for hiking, skiing, rafting and kayaking. Interested in learning more? We'd love to talk with you! Learn more at www.FairOaksEcoHousing.org.

LITTLE RIVER TENANCY IN COMMON IS ON THE OLYMPIC PENINSULA, NEIGHBORING OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK. Our 132 acres have Little River running through on the way to the newly undammed Elwha River. We have five resident members, and one vacant membership tied to a home for sale. The land is owned in common but members have exclusive rights to their homes. Most of our land is dedicated to forest growth with stewardship the main goal; sustainable commercial uses are possible in our Forest plan. Decisions are governed by our Agreement although consensus is very typical. We highly value participation in group designated projects which maintain our infrastructure, our forestry and garden projects. The available home is two story, one bath, two bedroom (or three, counting the finished attic). It has wood siding outside and wood paneled walls downstairs inside, sheetrock upstairs. Wood heat from a Finnish/Russian style cooktop stove heats the house with about 3 cords wood per year. Included are an unattached two car garage with additional area of workshop plus a rustic cabin with power and water (cold). The Tenancy membership would be about \$35,000 and the home \$150,000. CONTACT: Bob, at 360-452-4768 or e-mail: ruumax@outlook.com

BELFAST ECOVILLAGE IN MIDCOAST MAINE IS A 36-UNIT MULTIGENERATIONAL COMMUNITY ON 42 ACRES. The super energy efficient homes are clustered to preserve open space for recreation, agriculture and wildlife. Automobile access is limited and the houses are connected by a pedestrian path, making it a safe place for young children. A 4,000 square foot common house is nearly complete, and will have several voluntary shared meals weekly. Many homes have solar systems, making them near net zero. Members gather weekly to harvest food from the 3-acre worker share community farm and there are two multi-household flocks of laying hens. Members come from all walks of life and include educators, naturalist, carpenters, medical professionals, social workers, musicians, and artists. Belfast Ecovillage is located two miles from the quaint coastal town of Belfast, with a harbor, library, YMCA, schools, employers, and health food coop. For more information visit: Mainecohousing.org or call 207-338-9200

SANTA ROSA CREEK COMMONS, SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA. We are an intergenerational, limited equity, housing cooperative 60 miles north of San Francisco. Although cen-



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O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE is a 25-acre Regenerative Living Demonstration Site and Education Centre. We base our work on Permaculture principles, wellness, and community. OUR onsite school offers: Permaculture Design Certification, Permaculture Teacher Training, Earth Activist Training, Social Permaculture, natural building, short- and long-term internships, OUR Ecovillage Explorer Program, fully-customized courses, and much more. Volunteer, skill trade, and landshare opportunities also available. Please visit our website for more details and up-to-date course listings. K-12 and University/college credit courses available.

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trally 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.

DANCING RABBIT ECOVILLAGE, RUTLEDGE, MISSOURI.
Come live lightly with us, and be part of the solution! Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage is an intentional community and educational non-profit focused on living, researching, and demonstrating sustainable living possibilities. We live, work and play on 280 acres of lovely rolling prairie, and welcome new members to join us in creating a vibrant community and cooperative culture! Together we're living abundant and fulfilling low-carbon lives, using about 10% of the resources of the average American in many key areas. Our ecological covenants include using renewable energy, practicing organic agriculture, and no private vehicles. We use natural and green building techniques, share cars and some common infrastructure, and make our own fun. We welcome individuals, families, and sub-communities, and are especially seeking women, as well as people with leadership and communication skills. Join us in living a new reality: sustainable is possible! 660-883-5511; dancingrabbit@ic.org

SEEKING COMMUNITY

FEMINIST WRITER/ARTIST AURORA LEVINS MORALES SEEKS 3 NIGHTS TO 3 MONTHS PARKING FROM COMMUNITIES OR HOUSEHOLDS, for solar powered, nontoxic 32' mobile home. On two year journey to research and write about ecology, health, sustainability, and inclusion. Departing Boston January 2016 for warmer climes. www.littlevehicleforchange.org for details. aurora@historica.us.

EVENTS

SCHEMATA WORKSHOP - EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES THROUGH ARCHITECTURE - www.schemataworkshop.com - Are you part of a new community and wanting to know the next steps to build your dream? Do you need a community space to better serve your community life? Do you want to work with a professional who will listen to you and your unique community needs? Is your community growing and looking for ways to better use the space you currently have? Schemata Workshop is an architecture firm founded in 2004 with a passion for empowering communities through architecture. We have extensive experience facilitating collaborative workshops and in designing multi-family projects with a strong focus on community. Through working with cohousing groups on completed and current projects we have developed a successful practice based on honest collaboration, creating meaningful spaces, and optimizing our clients' budget. To see more of our projects please visit <http://www.schemataworkshop.com/> or email info@schemataworkshop.com with any questions you may have.

SHAMANIC RETREATS AT GAIA SAGRADA ECO-COMMUNITY IN ECUADOR. Enjoy life changing retreats in healing and awakening awareness in a beautiful paradise. Experience traditional and authentic Ecuadorian shamans and their ceremonies. Rock bottom, at-cost, non-profit prices you can afford. Sponsored by University of Metaphysical Sciences. www.GaiaSagrada.com

PUBLICATIONS, BOOKS, WEBSITES, WORKSHOPS

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or Visiting a Community, Consensus, Good Meetings, Making Agreements, Solving Conflicts, Cooperative Economics, and more! Available in print and digital format: www.ic.org/best-of-communities

COHOUSING COACHES / COHOUSING CALIFORNIA / AGING IN COMMUNITY: Hi, we're Raines Cohen and Betsy Morris, longtime communitarians living at Berkeley (CA) Cohousing. We've both served on the FIC board and have collectively visited over 100 cohousing neighborhoods, lived in two, and helped many. We have participated in the Group Pattern Language Project (co-creating the Group Works Deck) and are on the national cohousing advisory board. Betsy has an urban planning/economic development background; Raines wrote the "Aging in Community" chapter in the book *Audacious Aging*. We're participating with the Global Ecovillage Network and helping communities regionally organize in California. We'd love to help you in your quest for sustainable living. Let's talk about how we can help you make your dream real and understandable to your future neighbors. <http://www.CohousingCoaches.com/> 510-842-6224

FREE GROUP PROCESS RESOURCES AT TREE BRESSEN'S WEBSITE: WWW.TREEGROUP.INFO. Topics include consensus, facilitation, blocks and dissent, community-building exercises, alternative formats to general discussion, the list goes on! Articles, handouts, and more - all free!

DO YOU COHOUSEHOLD? See Cohouseholding.com

FRIENDS JOURNAL IS A MONTHLY QUAKER MAGAZINE FOR SPIRITUAL SEEKERS. Our mission is to communicate the Quaker experience in order to deepen spiritual lives. Read Friends Journal in print and online, Watch QuakerSpeak videos, Listen to free podcasts of articles. Subscriptions start at just \$28/year. Thank you for reading!

SOLAR POWER WITHOUT THE COSTS! What if you could have a solar system installed without the upfront costs, guesswork, maintenance, and long term return on investment? FIC has partnered with Sungevity Solar to offer you a free consultation. (Available in AZ, CA, CO, CT, DC, DE, MA, MD, NC, NJ, NM, NY, VT). If you like the results of the consultation, they will install a complete solar system for you for ZERO COST. Instead you can pay less than you would for the solar energy the system produces than you would for conventional dirty energy from the grid. PLUS - you'll receive your first \$1,000 of solar energy for free, and Sungevity will donate \$1,000 to FIC! :) To receive your consultation, please visit here: <http://www.sungevity.org/intentionalcommunity>

FORMING COMMUNITIES

SEEKING OTHERS FOR CREATING 55+ AFFORDABLE INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES founded on the values of kindness, service, resourcefulness, creativity, integrity, and "simple living and high thinking." The goal: Vibrant and active communities for those who live independently, as well as loving alternatives to conventional institutional care associated with aging. Write Liz at cosmosgarden@live.com.

FORMING COMMUNITY. 20 ACRES RURAL MISSOURI. Need honest, helpful, responsible, willing, permanent residents to learn to care for the place and help each other in exchange for living here with no rent. Must support yourselves. The land will not be sold. Combination duties to care for the place: inside, outside, clerical, bookkeeping, learn legal property care, learn to play guitar/sing for Country Gospel Music, Bluegrass Gospel Music/Hymns on stage. I sing harmony. I have much to teach you. I need some who can play guitar now. Protect the place and property but not change the rules. Want vegetarians, can be vegan, meat eaters have to stop eating meat. Eat a wide variety of natural foods (along with your junk food). Ambitious for sustainability and make electricity. Represent my place with honor and respect, groom yourself and dress decent. I will be drilling a second well soon. You build a shop or office for you to make a living here. I can buy tools if you protect, replace and repair them. No smoking, No drinking, No drugs, No chewing. No hunting. Non-animal profit. What are your talents and skills? I live here. 417-399-1032 Shirley

REAL ESTATE

STRAWBALE INN AT DANCING RABBIT ECOVILLAGE - THE MILKWEED MERCANTILE ECO INN IS FOR SALE! This beautiful and versatile building has many use options; continue running the Inn and Café (a turn-key business); use as a family or cooperative home; co-working space; or café/store with living quarters upstairs. Features include: screened wraparound porch, certified commercial kitchen, dining room, upstairs lounge, handicapped ramp. Four bedrooms, two showers, commercial composting toilet (one of each is accessible). Gorgeous reclaimed floors, community storm shelter in small basement, cistern and filter system for rainwater collection. Solar panels and wind turbine (grid tied). Full (non-transferable) liquor license. Wonderful location. The Milkweed Mercantile has a loyal following with built-in clientele; hundreds of people visit Dancing Rabbit each year (see reviews on TripAdvisor.com). Current owners are not leaving Dancing Rabbit, just hoping to retire, and will be available to train. Please see more details on our website: <http://bit.ly/1gf1tIT>

FOR RENT: SMALL ADOBE HOUSE IN HISTORIC MONTICELLO, NM - Excellent retreat for writing, creativity, dharma practice, gardening & healing. Near hot springs & hiking. Quiet 1BR, fireplace, greenhouse/bathroom, extra outdoor kitchen. Outer, Inner & Secret Gardens with lily pond, fire pit, meditation area, garden, fruit trees, solar shower, outdoor work and living areas. Composting toilet, grey water, drip irrigation and well. The Garage Mahal is a guesthouse or studio renovation waiting to happen. This organic gardening community needs young families! Rental available May 1st, \$500 + utilities, phone service w/ free long distance and wi-fi. Prefer couple or young family with building and gardening skills. 575.743.0330 or lou@pixelcircuit.org

ESTABLISHED RURAL TENNESSEE COMMUNITY HOME FOR SALE \$25,000. Available June 2016. Home is off-grid with solar power, propane, spring water. Two stories, three porches, outdoor and indoor showers, composting toilet, bidet, creeks, garden area, wooded. Ad on FIC website and pictures on Facebook: www.facebook.com/Off-Grid-Home-in-Community-for-Sale-1470252553289314/?fref=ts. 931-722-5096 or drquotes@hotmail.com.

LIVE YOUR DREAM - AND HELP FIC! -- An incredible property is now for sale which includes a \$10,000 donation to FIC when it is sold! Mention FIC to receive a free stay and dinner for serious inquiries. This amazing property for sale in the mountains of Western NC has everything needed to start and sustain an Intentional Community for anywhere from 35-40 core members in cabins and other hard lodging, and 50-150 others in primitive cabins, RV's, and tents. This 80 acre retreat includes Canopy zip line business in place, apple and asian pear orchard, honey bees, trout farm, blueberries, currants, 1500 daylily plants, numerous sheds and shop spaces, 3 bath houses, 3 greenhouses, laundry facilities, work-out room, 21 KW hydro generator, chicken coop, pig sty, 3 picnic shelters, 18 hole disc golf course, hiking & biking trails, and much more! \$1,250,000. Owner financing available with 25% down. Contact Cleve Young @ 828-765-9696 for more info, or email ads@ic.org to be put in touch via email.

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DOMES FOR SALE on Miccosukee Land Cooperative



3816 Lost Lane - 2 acres - 2 Domes - 1,134 and 851 sq ft - \$125,000. Geothermal HVAC! Wrap-around porch, heart pine floors, huge kitchen, plus 2 shelters/storage buildings.

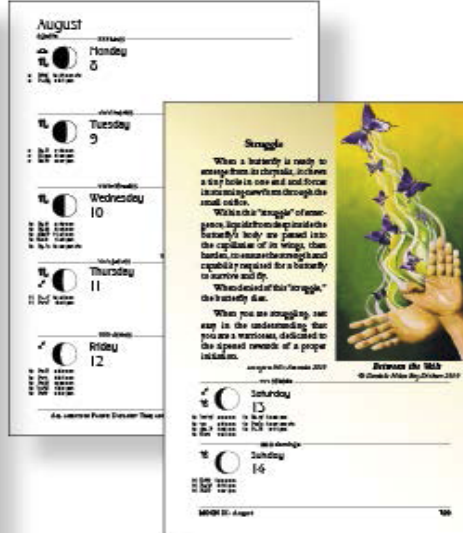
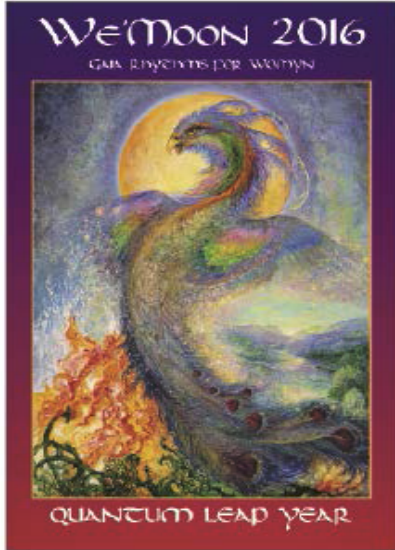
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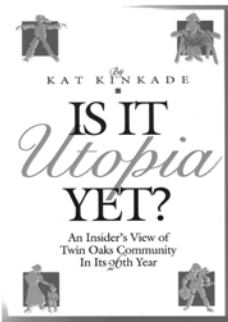
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An Insider's View of Twin Oaks Community in its 26th Year

by Kat Kinkade

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

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\$18.00 each includes S/H (US delivery)

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Valverde Commons Welcomes You



We are sustainable adult cohousing community in beautiful and arty Taos, New Mexico. With 8 lots still available out of 28, there's one waiting for you. Build your dream retirement home and join a lively group of folks enjoying their best years together. Come visit!

Our website at
www.valverdecommons.com
Email at valverdecommons@aol.com
Call Carolyn Schlam at 575-751-5751

Opportunities for people with diverse backgrounds at Camphill Village USA.

Camphill Village USA is a unique community of 100 volunteers and 100 adults with developmental disabilities in rural upstate New York who live and work together to build a community life in which the spiritual integrity and valued contribution of every individual is recognized, upheld and nourished. Join us for a year, a decade or a lifetime of service.

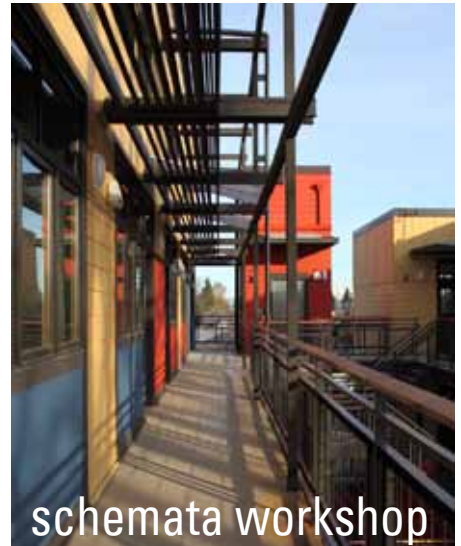


House Leaders
Workshop Leaders
Service Volunteers
AmeriCorps Members
Students of Social Therapy
in the Camphill Academy

For more information visit our website at camphillvillage.org.



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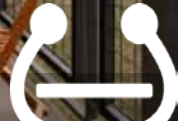


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FINDING COMMUNITY OUTSIDE OF "COMMUNITY"

(continued from p. 17)

and forth. Their parents and grandparents look out for him and let me know when there's trouble. The folks down the street watched our cat when we went back to Dancing Rabbit for a visit.

Missing DR

Friendly neighbors and well-established economic systems are great and all, but there are aspects of intentional community I haven't found out here in the big wide world. I miss feeling more comfortable letting people see my pit hair, and stopping for friendly chats on my mid-afternoon walks. I miss having people to talk to when something funny happens, or something sad or frustrating.

We don't have a car co-op out here, which is the one thing I thought was most important about what Dancing Rabbit was doing. It drives me crazy to see multiple cars in each driveway, every single day. There are houses with more cars than people, for crying out loud, but I don't feel like I can use any of them. Even trying to get people to use RelayRides.com didn't work. (That makes sense; their service is expensive and geared more toward urban people with newer cars.)

Speaking of driveways, trash day is a little weird, too. When I was looking for bottles for wine- and beer-making, I knew that there were plenty of bottles in the recycle bins, but I didn't feel like I could go get them. Also, it seems like there must be a more efficient system than the garbage truck stopping twice at each single-family dwelling. Coming up with ways to bring car sharing and other efficiencies of intentional community to extant neighborhood communities has become kind of a hobby of mine.

The pond and the 100-plus acres of protected wildlife habitat were possible only because of the intentional nature of the community of Dancing Rabbit. I miss them. Also not possible without a high degree of buy-in and sameness of intention are the decision-making structure and level of involvement in decisions usually left to individuals in the wider culture. My new neighborhood definitely doesn't get together to decide by consensus whether it's okay for me to cut a couple of young trees that shade my solar panels, and I don't need anyone's permission to adopt a dog or something. Those kinds of things help move a community toward its commonly-held intentions. I don't really miss them.

Then there's the community I've always had. My parents, my siblings and their spouses and children, aunts, uncles, and other elders, coworkers from previous jobs, and of course my friends out at Dancing Rabbit form a sort of "cloud community" that's always there, even when I don't talk to them for long spells, even when we're not on the best of terms. Family and old friends, I guess, are the most unintentional of communities, so they'll always be there, even though my intentions may change. 🐰

Sam and son lived at Dancing Rabbit from November 2009 through August 2014. Now she's a freelance writer, blogger (www.makingrabbittracks.com), and web developer. They're living outside the communities circuit but with all the same values and quirks they had "in community."

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OFFERINGS TO THE LAND

(continued from p. 19)

17. Take a young child to the land you are building a relationship with. Notice what they notice.

18. If you pray, try praying outside.

19. Learn about edible plants in your area and try eating something that you wildcraft from your land.

20. Sleep outside on a clear night with no tent.

21. Learn to make an herbal remedy from something growing on your land.

22. Paint or draw a beautiful spot on your land.

23. If you have a private spot where you will be safe and not disturb anyone, have sex outside. You can involve another human if you like, but doing this solo might allow you to focus more on the energy of the land around you.

24. Bring beautiful pieces of nature into your home where you will see them often: a sprig of pine, an autumn leaf, a few wildflowers, a beautiful shell.

25. Where it is safe to do so, walk barefoot on the earth.

26. Go outside to acknowledge the solstices and equinoxes in whatever way feels right to you. Notice how your land changes with the seasons.

27. Write a poem to or about the land.

These ideas are just a start. Anything that will help you come to know *this* piece of land in a specific and distinct way is a promising practice. Engage your creativity and try new ways of breaking down the barriers we place between ourselves and the out-of-doors. These ideas apply whether you have lived on the same piece of land for 60 years or you are spending three weeks on a farm for a sustainability course: befriend the land where you are and you'll never be lonely. 🌱

Mary Murphy is a wilderness guide and hunting instructor. When her wandering years came to an end she founded Mountainsong Expeditions in the wild forests of Vermont, where she helps people learn to be in deeper relationship with the land and each other. You can learn about her work or send her a message at www.mountainsongexpeditions.com.

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B. Outside county paid subs	945	951
1. In-county paid subs	7	7
2. Sales through dealers and other non-USPS paid distributions	880	866
3. Other classes through USPS	11	10
C. Total paid distribution	1,843	1,834
D. Free/Nominal Distribution		
1. Outside Country	0	0
2. In Country	0	0
3. Other classes through USPS	0	0
4. Outside the Mail	0	0
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I. Percent paid	100%	100%
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EVIDENCE AND BELIEFS: LESSONS FROM OBERLIN

(continued from p. 47)

employ logic and reason based on verifiable reality that has been honed by science.

The clash of beliefs in Oberlin over the veracity of climate science is seen throughout the world and is at extremes in US politics, where the majority in both the US House of Representatives and Senate has declared that human activities are not affecting Earth's climate. This is an incredible situation! Yet it is understandable in terms of the behavioral tendencies expressed by each person within a group, that in turn changes group behavior, thereby affecting the group's future.

Survival of Shackleton's *Endurance* Party at the beginning of the 20th century is the most notable survival saga of which we have record. Why did all 28 men survive? They all came home alive because of cooperation, discipline, luck, superb leadership, and an unflinching belief in verifiable, evidence-based reality. Equally important, Shackleton believed absolutely that he would deliver his men to safety, as did the men in his capacity to do so. Thus, they made the impossible possible.

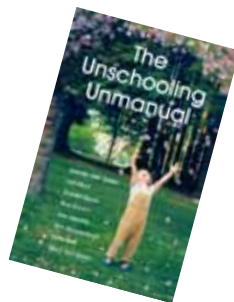
We can believe in the Easter bunny, the tooth fairy, and the magic of a sunrise without serious consequences. However, when making important decisions humanity will have to do as the *Endurance* party did, if we wish to bequeath our children and the rest of life a durable future. That is, we need to act aggressively on the best verifiable evidence available and then believe absolutely that we can create sustainable communities. 🌱

Carl N. McDaniel is Visiting Professor of Environmental Studies at Oberlin College. He has published over 60 scientific articles on animal and plant development and ecological economics, numerous general audience pieces, and written four books: Paradise for Sale: A Parable of Nature, coauthored with economist John M. Gowdy (California University Press, 2000); Wisdom for a Livable Planet: The Visionary Work of Terri Swearingen, Dave Foreman, Wes Jackson, Helena Norberg-Hodge, Werner Fornos, Herman Daly, Stephen Schneider, and David Orr (Trinity University Press, 2005); Trail Magic: Creating a Positive Energy Home (Sigel Press, 2012); and At the Mercy of Nature: Shackleton's Endurance Saga Gives Promise for Our Future (Sigel Press, 2014).



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THE LONG TRAIL HOME: DISCOVERING MY OWN COMMUNITY

(continued from p. 55)

and tears, I realize that I have indeed found my own “tribe” within The Sacred Hoop.

My own contribution to Global Community Communications Alliance—where I’ve chosen to live for the rest of my life—consists of refining what and who I am, and in giving back in various forms of service. I’ve always loved teaching, writing, and making up songs, and now I do all three as part of this service. I teach and train other teachers at our own children’s school; I write in various genres for different readers when time is available; and I make up songs for the children’s choir which I also direct. I’m a leader, a follower, a change-agent, and a student of revelation all at the same time! This is fortuitous as it creates a rounded, unwritten curriculum of personal development for me! I can feel the yeast of goodness working within our community of diverse people who have united in their spiritual goals. Although expansion through the dynamics of change and growth is often uncomfortable it’s also wonderfully recharging for my heart and mind.

Perhaps I’ve always longed at some unrecognized level to be with others in this way. I’m reminded of the words of Cecil Spring-Rice in one of those hymns that I used to enjoy singing at my first school. These words speak of the vision of light and life for the greater community of the whole world. It’s the vision of The Sacred Hoop fulfilled:

And there’s another country, I’ve heard of long ago,

Most dear to them that love her, most great to them that know;

We may not count her armies, we may not see her King;

Her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering;

And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase,

And her ways are ways of gentleness and all her paths are peace. 🌸

Clistine Morningstar is a graduate of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, London, and a poet. She wrote her acclaimed book Growing with Dance after years of research and teaching in that field. She is now teacher trainer and choir director at Global Community Communication Schools for Teens and Children.

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WHAT I MISS ABOUT FINDHORN

(continued from p. 59)

Findhorn that I most miss when I'm away include the location itself and the community culture. We live here on an isthmus—a roughly two-mile-long peninsula that separates Findhorn Bay from the North Sea. We are surrounded by water; the nearby beach is magnificent. There are traditional fishing villages, extensive forests, and rolling countryside all within close proximity. And the Highlands, with their magnificent peaks and countless lakes and lochs, are just an hour's drive away. At Findhorn we are truly blessed by the richness and diversity of our surroundings. I love living in this location! And, to the surprise of my Australian friends, I don't even mind the weather. In fact, I think I prefer it to the steamy subtropical conditions I experienced recently in Australia. One can at least dress for the cold; there is little one can do (apart from resorting to air conditioning) to alleviate extreme heat and humidity.

And what of the community culture? I am not going to attempt to elaborate on that here. There is too much to tell. Perhaps I could offer a glimpse simply by describing my choices for this weekend. On Friday night I enjoyed our end-of-week celebratory meal with friends in the Community Centre (CC) and followed that up with a hot tub under the stars, surrounded by snow. Yesterday, I spent the morning writing the above, lunched in the CC, and met a friend afterwards for a run on the beach followed by a massage exchange. In the evening, I shared an excellent pizza from our on-site pizzeria with another friend and then went with her to watch our annual pantomime at Cluny Hill, our second campus in the town of Forres, five miles away. The panto was written and performed by people I know and love. It was amateur, exuberant, chaotic, and hugely successful. The enormous dining room at Cluny was packed with an engaged and highly appreciative audience.

This morning (Sunday) I may play golf with friends if the weather is conducive. Otherwise I'll go to our regular Sunday morning Taizé session of devotional dancing and singing. Brunch will follow, providing another opportunity to catch up with friends and colleagues. I don't yet have a plan for the afternoon, but expect that something will crop up. There is almost certainly a talk scheduled for 12:30, our "Sunday Slot," which I'll attend if the topic is of interest. Otherwise I may just get some work done around the house. I need to chop and bring in firewood, for example. This evening I have a choice between attending a session of dance (5Rhythms) in the Universal Hall or joining a support group of friends who are exploring issues of love and sexuality. I'll probably choose the latter; the "Healing Love and Sexuality, Findhorn" group is a new and nascent initiative that deserves support.

That is a typical weekend! The cultural life here in Findhorn is as full and rich as I wish it to be. Most activities occur on campus. When I need a car for a short journey (to Cluny or to play golf) I can choose from the several late model vehicles (including two fully electric Nissan Leafs) in our community carpool.

Life in this community is good! I miss it when I'm away. 🌿

Graham Meltzer is a long-time member of Findhorn community and author of Findhorn Reflections: A very personal take on life inside the famous spiritual community and ecovillage (see review in COMMUNITIES #168, p. 65), from which the above article is excerpted.



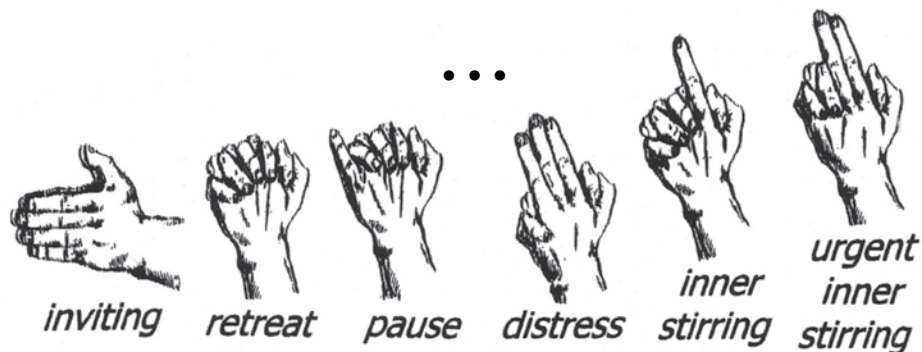
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INTEGRATIVE CONVERSATION: ARRIVING ON EARTH

(continued from p. 80)



THE HAND SIGNS

Pause (hands folded with the two little fingers pointing upward to form a steeple) means you're taking a quiet moment to process something or you're feeling crowded by words.

Inner Stirring (hands folded with the two index fingers pointing upward to form a steeple) means something is stirring inside of you that involves no emotional charge.

Urgent Inner Stirring (hands folded with the two index and middle fingers pointing upward to form a steeple) means an emotional charge is involved. (Index fingers crossed means a wound has been triggered.)

Distress (index, middle, and fourth fingers pointing upward) means you've got something going on inside of you that you're not ready to talk about, but quiet companionship would be helpful right now.

Inviting (open palms pressed together with all fingers extended and pointing in someone's direction) is an offer of attention to someone. (The same sign held in an upward position means **Presence** or **Accepting**. It's an offer of encouragement or an accepting of an offer.)

...

The "dominator-model" of conversation (where the person who's talking dominates and controls the space) has been crippling our relationship with the silence for thousands of years, making the texture of our silence *disconnective* instead of *connective*. Disconnective silence damages every living system. It turns everything against itself. It shortens every life. Nothing is more important than understanding the difference between connective and disconnective silence.

Dragging children straightaway into wordage without giving them a strong foundation in sign language has made conceptual reality and the conceptual mind itself into an energetic anomaly at best—at worst, the prison of our non-conceptual souls.

Our word *becomes* our eye-of-seeing. It becomes our perception, so changing our relationship with words changes everything, leaving us seeing far and near, a world we never saw before. Language designs and *becomes* the energy field of our body so conversation itself is our best chance for healing. Not designing a therapeutic element into our conversational life, we squander the healing genius that would give itself to us *through the body of language* if we only took a small moment to consider. The letters of a word converse with each other and so the word is born. The words of a sentence converse with each other and a thought completes the circle of itself. The sea converses with the shore. The less converses with the more—the Earth with the sky, the where with the why—the heart with the feeling, the wound with its healing. Everything is talking back and forth to everything else *all of the time*. In all things language is natural and implicit. A bigger idea of language and conversation makes a bigger reality *and healing needs a lot of space*. The stars talk back and forth to each other. Vision converses with destiny and so the world is born. 🍷

Michael Bridge lives in Sebastopol, California. He sells his art and writings at farmers' markets and fairs and searches for community and for himself. See also his story "May the Circles Be Unbroken: Life in Wetherweed" in COMMUNITIES #168.

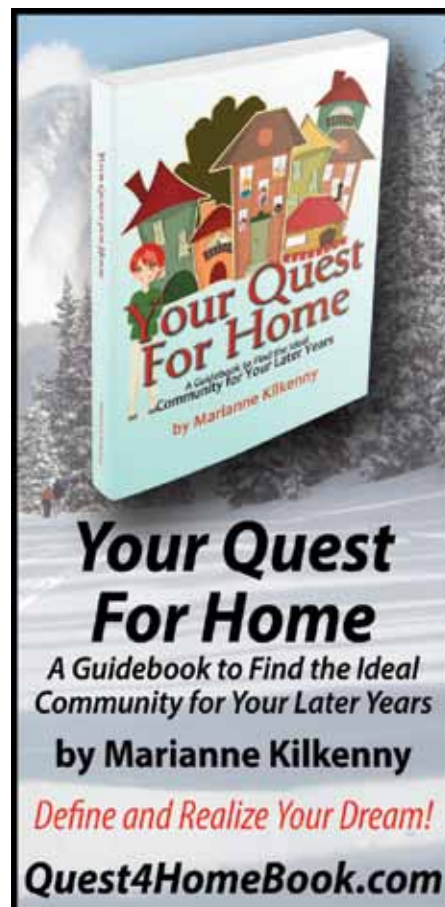


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INTEGRATIVE CONVERSATION: Arriving On Earth



Children can learn over a hundred hand signs before saying their first word. Signing seats itself more naturally in the body than speech. Not answering the unworded genius of presence that defines every child, we learn a brokenness. Using sign language to anchor speech in the body and in Nature resolves the brokenness and heals more than you'd imagine on a daydreaming day.

• • •

Libby is seven years old and she wants to think about something the teacher just said. She makes the sign for “pause” (hands folded with the two little fingers pointing upward to form a steeple).

The teacher doesn't see Libby making the sign for pause, but Mondo sees her. Mondo's eight years old and he's sitting on the other side of the circle. (Learning does a circle dance inside of us, so arranging the classroom in a circle helps the drama of the learning event to find itself in the drama of the moment.) Jonquil also sees Libby. Jonquil's nine.

Jonquil and Mondo both make the sign for “inviting” (palms pressed together with all fingers extended and pointing in Libby's direction), letting everyone know that something about Libby has caught their attention. The teacher notices Mondo and Jonquil, then notices Libby. The teacher pauses. It's a miracle.

Ten seconds pass. Twenty seconds. No word is spoken. This is revolutionary theater. The silence is tingling and alive with an unspoken agreement between all the members of the class...an agreement that needs no words to explain itself. A real drama is unfolding in the life of the universe.

Half a minute passes. Libby feels settled and complete in her pause. She concludes the pause by making the sign for “inviting” and directing it back to the teacher, inviting the teacher to continue.

The teacher makes the same sign back to Libby, inviting Libby to check in with herself to see if anything might be stirring in her thoughts and feelings that might want to step out and show itself to the world. With the sign for “accepting” (same as “inviting,” only with the fingers pointing upward instead of forward), Libby accepts the teacher's invitation and opens her inner eye to look around inside and see if anything is going on.

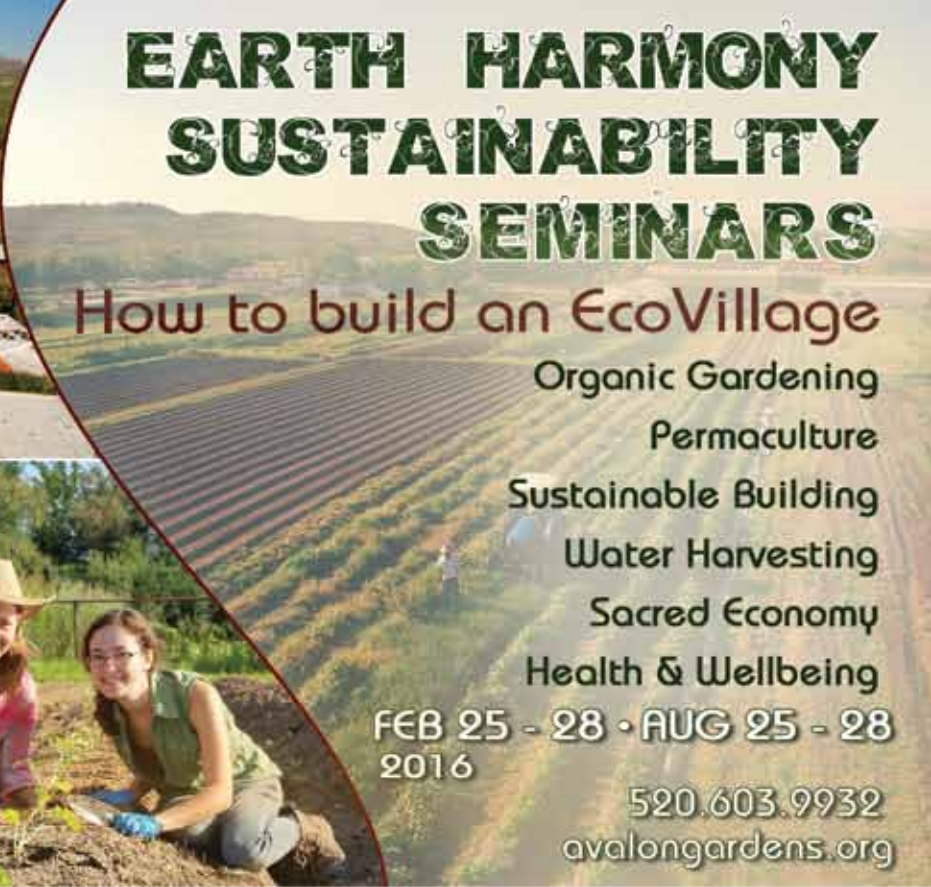
Ten seconds pass. A thought hops out. The thought takes Libby by surprise. She wonders where thoughts come from. She speaks.

A short conversation between members of the class ensues. The conversational life of each child is nourished and deepened. The children make the sign for “inviting” again, directing the moment back into the teacher's care. The teacher accepts and continues. A great respect stirs in the underbrush, the wilderness of the moment.

In mostly silence the dance is choreographed. It's not a silence of absence, but a silence of presence. It isn't a disconnective silence (the kind that fragments us and leaves us in pieces), but a connective silence, a unified field. It isn't a silence that is wanting in meaning, but a silence that is meaning itself, a silence filled by a living contract between all the members of the class, promising to honor the quiet sanctity of inner life above all else. Libby's inner dialogue, her conversation with herself, is deepening and learning dimension.

Here is a shift in the directive that invents our conversational moment and choreographs our conversational life together here on Earth...the directive that manages and sculpts our attention as humans. It's a shift that urges our attention away from what any one person has to say at any given time and gives the focus more to what's going on inside of us and between us. The shift involves a humanizing. By our humanizing we are rescued. By our humanizing we are healed.

(continued on p. 79)



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