The Gift Economy of Standing Rock

Communities

Life in Cooperative Culture

Summer 2017 • Issue #175

ECONOMICS in COOPERATIVE CULTURE

Towards a Joyful Economics

Community as Economic Engine

Servant Leadership in Cooperative Business

Mobile Home Parks as a Path to Cohousing

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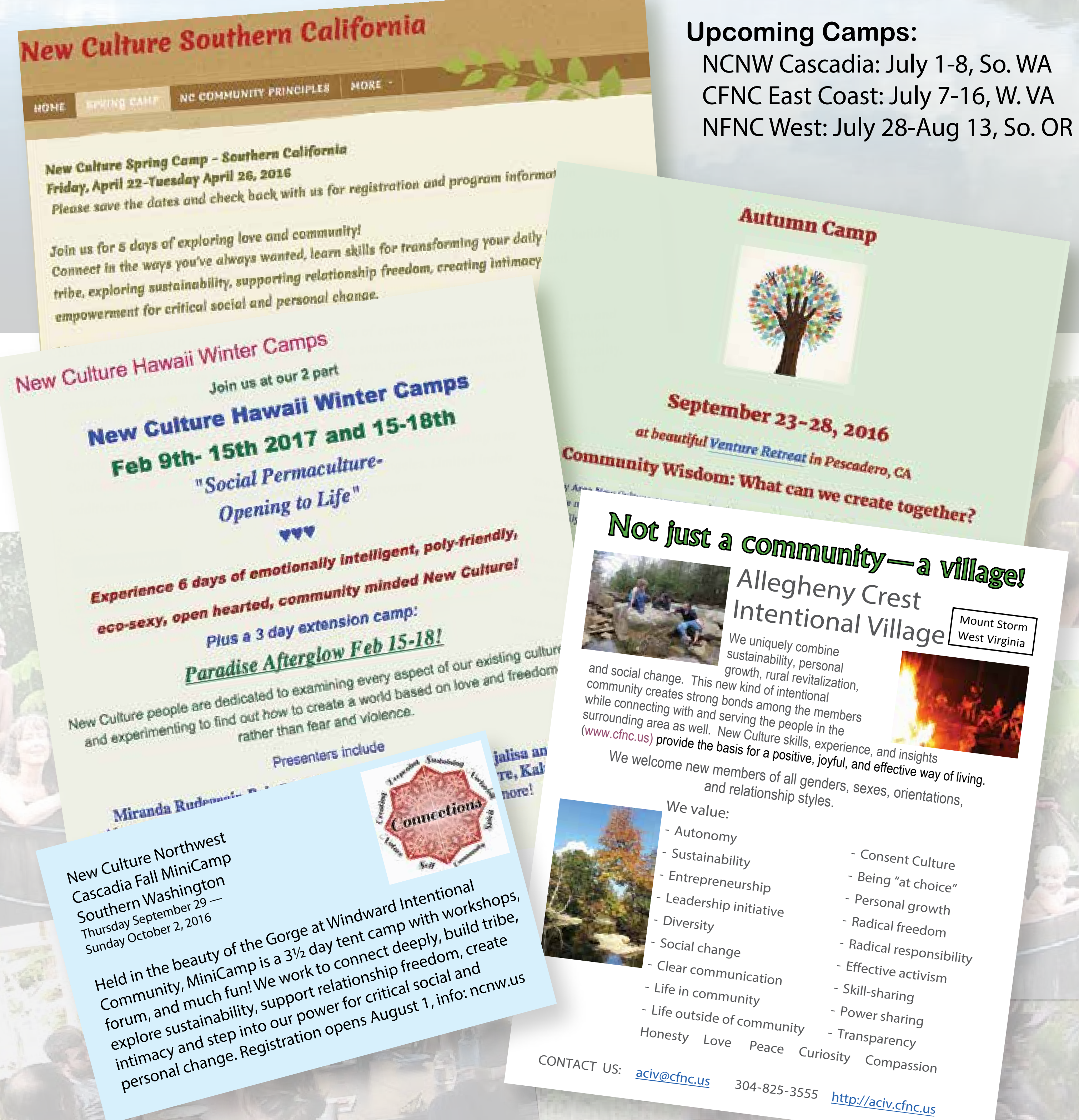

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Issue #175 • Summer 2017

ECONOMICS IN COOPERATIVE CULTURE

12 **Towards a Joyful Economics**
Helen Zuman
From Gift Circles in Brooklyn to the sharing economy at an ecovillage-based collective house, the author explores practical applications of Sacred Economics.

15 **The Gift Economy of Standing Rock**
Murphy Robinson
The principles of indigenous culture informed the Water Protectors' camps: generosity, compassion, and collective survival took precedence.

18 **Participatory Budgeting in an Income-Sharing Community**
Adder Oaks
How does one share income and expenses among a hundred people? Twin Oaks discovers how to supplant apathy with widespread engagement.

22 **Servant Leadership in Cooperative Business: Stirring It Up at East Wind Nut Butters**
Sumner Nichols
An egalitarian community's General Manager reflects on embodying collective values and ecological sanity in a three-million-dollar-a-year business.

26 **Community as Economic Engine**
Laird Schaub
A long-time communard suggests ways non-income-sharing communities can better support their members' economic well-being.
- **Redefining Terms**
- **Challenges Peculiar to Community-Based Businesses**
- **Profile of Members Seeking Part-Time Employment**
- **Defining Living Wage, and More**
- **Laird's Economic Journey**

31 **Economy, Community, and Place**
Lindsay Hagamen
Economy and *stewarding our home* were once synonymous, and can be again.

34 **A New Economy: Connections of Affection**
Helen Iles
The Age of Transition is no longer ahead of us; it has already begun.

34

44

36 **Towards a Relationship Economy at Port Townsend EcoVillage**
Viki Sonntag
From the Honeybee Democracy Proposal to incorporating low-cost housing options, a cohousing group finds ways to welcome and empower more members.

40 **Home Ownership Is Dead! Long Live the Permanent Real Estate Cooperative!**
Janelle Orsi
Removing houses from the speculative market promises a renewed culture of inclusiveness, mutual aid, self-help, grassroots organizing, and economic revitalization.

41 **Mobile Home Parks: A Fast and Inexpensive Path to Cohousing**
William Noel
Mobile home and RV parks present an unequaled opportunity to accelerate the transition to more widespread community living.

44 **Business Co-ops as a Prelude to Intentional Community**
Werner Kontara
Developing a successful business before starting a residential community around it offers distinct advantages.

46 **Community Is the Best Medicine**
A guide to cooperative living on a disability income
Lily Silver
Those living with disabilities have many options for finding community; here are suggestions on where and how to look.

48 **Exemplars: An Introduction**
Paul Freundlich
A library explores initiatives consistent with the values of sustainability, cooperation, and community, integrating the economic advantages of "scaling up" and "scaling down."

50 **Living Out a Gift Economy in Community with Others**
Tina Dunn
(with input from others in the Jesus Christian community)
Putting love into practice can be done even when you have nothing materially.

53 **Economics and Cooperation in Community: The Ultimate Contest**
Dan Schultz
A once fiercely competitive athlete becomes a cheerleader for Team Cooperation.

54 **Let All Money in the World Become Everyone's Money: Towards a Society Where All People Can Share Money**
Yoshifumi Nakano (called Nakanon)
A spiritually affluent economy requires a revolution in cooperation and sharing.

VOICES

4 Letters

6 Publisher's Note
Transforming Economics
Sky Blue

8 Notes from the Editor
"Stewarding Our Home": a Place for Everyone
Chris Roth

58 Mixing Sociability and Utility: A Recipe for Community Connection
Annie Raser-Rowland
•Young Fava Bean Smash Recipe

60 An Invitation to Single Men: Consider Cohousing
Carolyn Schlam

62 Sunflower Cohousing en France
Martin Prosser

64 How to Create New Nature Reserves
Dr. Adrian Cooper

66 Reach

76 Creating Cooperative Culture
Together Resilient:
Why This Book? Thoughts on Building Community in the Age of Climate Disruption
Sky Blue

ON THE COVER

This artwork by Elizabeth D'Angelo accompanies her friend Lily Silver's article, "Community Is the Best Medicine: A guide to cooperative living on a disability income." The artist—spreader of love and hope, illness warrior, and force of nature—often paints with her arms pinned to her sides due to severe weakness and muscle spasms from advanced ME/CFS. Painting is her meditation, her grounding rod, and her calling, but it is the connection with others through her art that inspires her the most. To see more of her artwork, visit www.elizabethdangelo.com.

Communities
Life in Cooperative Culture

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Letters

Living Well with Less

Your Spring 2017 issue [#174, Communities and Climate Change] was truly inspiring. The countless stories of the present efforts being made toward a future which will require "Living Well with Less" using survival methods of bygone years is a heartening response to the question of *"What can we do?"* regarding climate change.

I am a remnant blood member of Amish Mennonite Anabaptist heritage born in 1931. My roots stretch back to a time when my immigrant ancestors lived a lot like folks at Dancing Rabbit and other back to the earth communities around the world.

Years after having left the family farms for the siren call of higher education I turned back in the middle '60s to my communal roots toward life on a small beyond Walden Two organic farm where I live today midst the spirits of the countless fellow travelers who both passed through and remain.

I send best wishes as you keep up the good work of "community life in the cooperative culture." I cherish you all very much as my extended family.

With respect,
Roger E. Ulrich
Lake Village Homestead Farm
Kalamazoo, Michigan

New Vistas: An Alternative View

In the latest Communities [#174, Communities and Climate Change] just received today, which has many very useful articles, I want to comment on the piece by Ma'ikwe Ludwig entitled "Variations on a Theme: Low-Carbon Communities of All Sorts." It mentions three community projects, including "New Vistas."

I am very familiar with one part of the New Vistas community enterprise proposed by its chief/founder and financier, David Hall. I'm writing to you because I'd like to suggest that Hall's community project that he'd like to center around four authentic traditional villages in Vermont describes a classic model of how NOT to go about it.

Hall would like to bring thousands of people mostly from the outside, presumably mostly Mormons, to an area noted for its quaint, historic Vermont villages. He'd like to engineer a very large "community," using a 19th century blueprint related to Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon church—which would swamp and maybe destroy these relatively tiny towns. There is a monument to Smith in this sub-region of Vermont (his birthplace). Most of the people in the four towns, who were not consulted, are dead against this project and have put together a massive body of community resistance. They believe Hall's project would bring disaster to this part of Vermont. He has been

quietly buying up land in the area, apparently not always using his name. (At last count, we heard that he now owns some 1,500 acres.)

Since Lisa and I have a home in Vershire, several miles away, where we spend three months a year, I was asked by two area leaders of the group opposing Hall's plan to join the resistance. I guess they assumed that my personal experience with community and also with development projects would buttress their efforts. Specifically, I was asked to write a Letter to the Editor, that was published in several local newspapers. We attended one big community meeting in Sharon that was supposed to be a dialogue with Hall but he never showed up, undoubtedly due to the strong opposition in the towns. Everywhere in the area were signs saying "Stop New Vista."

I should add that if Hall had met with the local people and suggested that he'd like to invest resources in a small-scale sustainable community effort, with their advice and assistance, there might have been a more welcome response. However, as it stands, Hall's ill-advised venture that envisions an eventual thousands of New Vista settlers is a little case study that I thought might interest your readers.

An Open Letter to New Vista Planners

Opinion/May 19, 2016

As a neighbor of such surrounding towns as Strafford, Tunbridge, Royalton, and Sharon, and after reviewing your proposed plans for this area, I feel compelled to offer several comments.

A retired political science professor from the University of Wisconsin, for years I taught courses related to community development. I have practical experience in creating planned communities around the world, and cofounded an intentional community in Wisconsin committed to sustainable living. I am well informed about the kind of project you propose.

After reading and thinking about your material, I strongly oppose your going forward with your project in Vermont, although I commend you for your vision and could see significant benefits were you to implement your ideas in appropriate locations. My reasoning:

• The towns and surrounding areas you have in mind have histories that go back centuries. They have maintained their unique character as small, cohesive communities. Inserting, over a short time, a population of thousands—even hundreds—of new residents coming from outside, would radically and negatively change these towns.

• The culture and economies here have evolved gradually, with homegrown small businesses and democratic governance based in indigenous local leadership. With a sizable population influx having little or no background/knowledge about how these towns "work," the precious qualities making our communities so attractive would be dramatically jeopardized.

• Sustainable living in the existing culture of these towns emphasizes simplicity, low consumption, sensitive stewardship of natural resources, and holistic values built up over generations that emphasize cooperation and interdependence.

• Your project, even if guided by competent planners who have mastered the "sustainability" rhetoric, would completely change the prevailing traditions and values giving these towns their special character.

I urge you to take your enthusiastic energy and sizable resources elsewhere instead of threatening the qualities that make these Vermont communities unique.

Belden Paulson
Vershire, Vermont

Inspiring Activism

Chris, the latest issue [#174, Communities and Climate Change] touches me deeply. I've been a climate activist, including creating an organization called the Adaptation Network whose goal was to infuse adaptation alongside mitigation into public consciousness; we closed when that started to happen. I just paid for two digital copies of the latest issue to send to two friends. Of course I could have photocopied my print edition or I could have just bought one, but intellectual property is about the only kind of private property I respect and I really respect it! I am loving each article and as with each issue of Communities, do so slowly so I can really take in the underpinning change of perspective I gain as well as the information in each article. The article that moved me to share two copies with two leaders in the climate world is your interview with Nikki Silvestri. The introduction to the article makes plain in a subtle way how bowled over you were by her. I am writing to say how right you were to pursue an interview with her, and how bowled over I am as well. Thank you SO much for your interview! And the magazine and this issue, of course.

Beth Raps, RAISING CLARITY
Berkeley Springs, West Virginia

Climate Crisis, Dystopia, and Community

The key word to your article [Notes from the Editor, Communities #174] is vision. Personally my vision has always been a world of small "sustainable" communities throughout the country. Just like the "old world," a network of small villages in idyllic countrysides; each village a community taking care of each other, the earth, and sharing their surplus with neighboring villages within a small "manageable" area.

I am intrigued by mankind's evolution away from such a natural lifestyle towards the lifestyle that depends on monetary exchange and technology. My observation is that once the spiritual aspect is void in one's life, then the connection to nature and its universal abundance is missing in one's life. It is replaced by survival in a mechanized world of city life and urban sprawl.

I really enjoyed this issue for the message it portrayed of consciously living a "community lifestyle" right where one lives. After years of wondering how I personally could take an "activist" role towards change, I have come to a place of peace living the lifestyle I choose and balancing it with the "new world" way of things. I realize that my neighbors are my community, my place of work is my community, and my "homestead" is my activism.

James Kozlik
Emigrant, Montana

We welcome reader feedback on the articles in each issue, as well as letters of more general interest.
Please send your comments to editor@ic.org or Communities,
81868 Lost Valley Ln, Dexter OR 97431.
Your letters may be edited or shortened. Thank you!

Communities Editorial Policy

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

Through fact, fiction, and opinion, we offer fresh ideas about how to live and work cooperatively, how to solve problems peacefully, and how individual lives can be enhanced by living purposefully with others. We seek contributions that profile community living and why people choose it, descriptions of what's difficult and what works well, news about existing and forming communities, or articles that illuminate community experiences—past and present—offering insights into mainstream cultural issues. We also seek articles about cooperative ventures of all sorts—in workplaces, in neighborhoods, among people sharing common interests—and about "creating community where you are."

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

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

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What is an "Intentional Community"?

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

Publisher's Note BY SKY BLUE

TRANSFORMING ECONOMICS

What if no one had to worry about money? Everyone worries about money, rich or poor, but particularly those whose access to money doesn't instill confidence in survival. Struggling to acquire enough money to meet basic needs, let alone have a few nice things, is a reality for the majority of people on the planet. There's an enormous amount of stress and trauma involved in money being the center of our socioeconomic existence.

Perhaps it's not so much money in itself. I don't really buy the argument that tools are value-neutral, but, going with the idea that money is just a tool, or a form of energy, which can be used for good or ill, I would say that capitalism is the problem.

I understand capitalism as being focused on the cycle of investment and return of capital. You invest money in something, eventually you get back your investment plus a return. You take that return, invest it again, get more money. Of course, it's a gamble; there's no guarantee of a return. It's a game. And the reality is that only a very small percentage of people have enough chips to ante up. If you're fortunate or lucky enough, you can take a seat at the table, and when your money is making money, your survival is less in question (though it's all a matter of degree).

This game of capitalism, growing your money, is based on a geometric equation. It grows on an upward curve, not a straight line. Eventually that curve approaches infinity. In other words, capitalism assumes infinite growth. But the world is finite. Also, the current money system has a built-in deficit of available currency in relation to debt, so the only way for the game to keep working is if the economy keeps growing. It's an inherently unsustainable system.

In today's world, capitalism has been developed to peak efficiency. With the injection of cheap fossil fuels, global free-market capitalism has become incredibly proficient at expanding quickly to exploit people and resources everywhere on the planet. We're so addicted to this game of making money that we're creating threats to our very survival. There is a certain irony to the fact that, while people's survival depends on acquiring money, the obsession with acquiring money is threatening the survival of our species.

This is not a game we want to keep playing. The thing is, it's the only game in town. You can

create games within that game, but you're still playing the game, and since you're playing for your life, it's inherently stressful.

What kind of human potential would be unleashed if that stress over money were relieved? What if every person knew that they could get their basic needs met? I think the ability to get one's basic needs met is a human right, and, it so happens, so does the United Nations. In 1948, the UN adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. If you haven't read it, I highly recommend it (see en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_Declaration_of_Human_Rights). Article 25 says, "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of [themselves] and [their] family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond [their] control."

Obviously this right (among many others in the declaration) are not being honored for the vast majority of people on the planet. It begs the question, who's responsible for meeting these needs? National governments seem like the obvious candidate, but while that may be their responsibility, they are clearly failing at it. This might seem odd given that most governments in the world at this point are democracies, and democracy is supposed to be government of the people, by the people, for the people. So, isn't the role of government to facilitate the people of a country meeting their own needs?

There are lots of potential reasons why this isn't working out. My inclination is to point to classism combined with the power of transnational corporations that prioritize profit over people and the planet, and the corrupting influence they have on elections and through lobbying. Regardless, unless we're ready to overthrow the government and make it do its job, the reality is that we need to take of care of things ourselves.

Isn't this one of the things that community is all about, groups of people taking care of each other? Community comes in all different forms, and intentional community is one way of identifying a cluster of similar forms. The body of theory and rhetoric on community in general is vast and I'm not going to attempt to summarize it. What I offer is one possible definition that provides context to the idea of intentional community: A community is a set of social and economic relationships and the place(s) where those relationships interact. The FIC defines an intentional community as a group of people who live together or share common facilities and who regularly associate on the basis of explicit common values. Essentially intentional community is distinguished by the presence of common ownership and a set of shared values.

At their core, to some degree or another, intentional communities are attempts to satisfy the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They are attempts at collective self-determinism, the ability of groups of people to have reasonable access to resources and to control over the conditions of their daily lives. All people should have this right. All people should have access to the resources and decision-making they need, not only to sustain themselves, but thrive, and no one should be able to access resources and decision-making in a way that takes away from the equitable access of others. Intentional communities are small-scale models of this. However, because of the world we live in and the way most intentional communities are financially structured, living in intentional communities, or starting them in the first place, often requires an access to resources that most people don't have.

It's also important to note that, in the US at least, the people who have the resources to start or buy in to intentional communities tend to be white, and various private and public institutions that have to be dealt with tend to be discriminatory. Intentional communities are predominantly white and express white culture, which means that they are far less accessible to people who aren't willing to conform themselves to white culture on that level. Cultural access is as important as economic access. This is also true of course for queer and trans people, disabled people, and any other group not seen as normative and afforded the privileges therein. In other words, we're dealing with structural inequities that have disadvantaged many groups of people, and if we're serious about taking care of each other, we have to actively look for ways of remedying that, both within our communities and in larger systems. We need to take care of everyone. We want everyone to be able to manifest their potential. Everyone. Period. This isn't going to happen on its own.

I live at Twin Oaks Community, which is a member of the Federation of Egalitarian Communities. Each of the FEC communities follows seven principles, the first two of which are the most relevant here:

• Holds its land, labor, income and other resources in common.

• Assumes responsibility for the needs of its members, receiving the products of their labor and distributing these and all other goods equally, or according to need.

I think we're so inculturated to capitalism and private property that it's hard to grasp how radical these principles are. Similar to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, what if these principles

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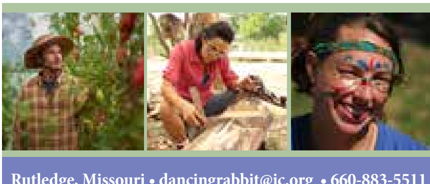

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were actually implemented for all people on the planet? It's hard for people to imagine what this looks like for a community of 100 people like Twin Oaks (simply explaining it to people, or taking them on a Saturday tour, often blows their minds), let alone for all of humanity.

Something happened to me, from when I moved to Twin Oaks when I was 19 years old until I took a break from the community eight years later. Things that most people take for granted seemed very strange. When I ventured back out into the wide world, this stress over money, which is like air for most people, was glaringly obvious. Spending half your time working a job you don't like to earn money to pay for the things you need, it's just the way it is. Except, there are options, and after eight years in an income-sharing commune, I had ask, why would you do that?

Obviously the answer is most people have no real choice. Alternatives are in short supply and creating alternatives requires access to resources most people don't have. It also brings its own stress, as anyone who has tried to start their own business will tell you. Cooperative ventures add a further level of stress, which is figuring out how to do cooperative governance, management, and decision-making. The responsibility, the interpersonal challenges, on top of trying to buy property or start a business in an incredibly unfriendly financial and legal environment, is just more than most people want to deal with.

I found all of this out the hard way after I left Twin Oaks. I spent four years living in Charlottesville, Virginia. I lived in a formal collective house, got involved with Food Not Bombs, organized some actions for the local alternative transportation advocacy group, helped start a small car co-op, and helped start two cooperative businesses, one of which partnered with a local nonprofit to help low-income families start vegetable gardens. People involved with various of these projects were also involved in other community-based projects and lived in other informal collective houses.

My focus was on starting the cooperative businesses. It seemed to me that if we wanted to start freeing people up for community-building, for activism, for art, for personal growth, we needed more opportunities for flexible work at decent wages that weren't soul-sucking. I'd gotten some experience in business management in the businesses at Twin Oaks, but to learn more I went to the local chapter of the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE). For $80, they were offering a series of four three-hour seminars on starting a business. Plus, you could get as much free business counseling as you wanted. This was all extremely useful.

One of the most eye-opening moments in this process was during one of the seminars, led by a former venture capitalist from Dallas. He said that your whole goal is building up your business to the point where you sell it for a lot of money to some bigger business. Then, you take that money and start over. I was shocked, though not surprised, and ultimately it was gratifying to have this simple truth of capitalism laid bare. No shame, no qualms, that's simply the game we're playing. And since you have no choice but to play that game to some degree or another, I decided that I should learn how to play it well.

My overall goal was to help foster the same kind of social and economic support system that I experienced at Twin Oaks, but in a decentralized way in an urban setting accessible to more people. We had plenty of success, and plenty of failure, though I certainly learned something from every attempt. Also, it was just slow going, a lot of herding cats and pulling teeth, which will sound familiar to anyone who's lived or worked in cooperative groups. There's a lot to learn, and a lot to unlearn, and it's a lifelong process.

Ultimately I moved back to Twin Oaks for personal reasons, but the appeal of trying to transform the economy of a city so that cooperative economics are the norm is still an inspiring idea to me. What would it look like for an entire city to be organized on the principles that all land, labor, and other resources are held in common, and that the citizens are collectively responsible for meeting all their needs? In other words, what if an entire city were organized as an intentional community?

To some degree, I think that's essentially what the Transition Town model is trying to accomplish. The idea with Transition Towns is ultimately to have the local municipality approve an energy descent plan that's been generated by the citizenry through a massive community organizing effort. If the energy descent plan represents the "common values," and since people in the city certainly live together, share common facilities, and regularly associate with each other, then a fully realized Transition Town would meet our definition of an intentional community.

Lots of organizations and movements are working on this problem with different frameworks. The idea of the commons, of natural resources being accessible to all members of society, goes way back, and many groups are trying to bring it forward again. The New Economy Coalition has over 160 member organizations all working on justice in its various forms, be it economic justice, racial justice, climate justice, or the intersection of them all. Also important are political groups fighting to dismantle corporate personhood and get money out of politics.

Intentional communities are part of a diverse, global movement to fundamentally transform the economy, from the hyper-local to the global. We're creating a new game, and everyone will get to be at the table. ❧

Sky Blue (sky@ic.org) is Executive Director of the Fellowship for Intentional Community.S

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"Stewarding Our Home": A PLACE FOR EVERYONE

Chris Roth

From upscale cohousing developments to "gift economy" activist camps and homeless villages, from both secular and spiritual communities that celebrate shared material abundance to settlements embracing voluntary simplicity, from groups which handle a lot of money to groups that eschew it, intentional communities and IC-like projects are incredibly diverse. They can and do accommodate a wide range of economic circumstances and approaches. "Economics in cooperative culture"—the focus of this issue—is expressed in myriad forms, at least some of which are likely to improve almost anyone's life.

In fact, for a wide swath of the population, stereotypes and prejudices may be the main hindrances to finding an intentional community that fits. Communal living does not have to mean "living in squalor in a commune" (if one is convinced that's what income-sharing while leading a life less focused on personal possessions means)—nor, for those in more challenged economic circumstances (to whom the words "downwardly mobile" may sound like a cruel joke), are there as few options as might initially appear to be the case with too narrow a search focus (on, for example, the buy-in costs for one of the aforementioned cohousing communities; there are many other options for participation, even within cohousing).

I believe many of us living in intentional community arrive here driven by values that question mainstream economics; we want to participate in something different. My own community journey was largely propelled by a worldview that could not accept the assumptions (about myself, others, or the earth) embedded in any other options I saw. As communitarians struggle to meet the challenges of surviving and thriving within the larger economy (much of which seems out of alignment with many core communitarian values), it is worthwhile reminding ourselves that challenges and occasional setbacks and compromises are not necessarily signs of failure, but rather reflections of the magnitude of the struggle between what we know in our bones are more healthful and sustainable ways of "stewarding our home" (to quote Lindsay Hagamen's article in this issue) and the ways in which it is currently done, or not done, in the name of the dominant economic systems.

"Economics is a form of brain damage" (a phrase apparently coined by Hazel Henderson, and since echoed by David Brower, David Suzuki, and others) does not have to be the final word. Economics can be something else. The purpose of this issue is to suggest how profoundly different it can be when recast in support of the common good and when viewed through a cooperative lens. Thanks again for joining us!

Chris Roth edits Communities, *recently edited Ma'ikwe Ludwig's* Together Resilient, *and is a long-time member of Lost Valley community outside Dexter, Oregon.*

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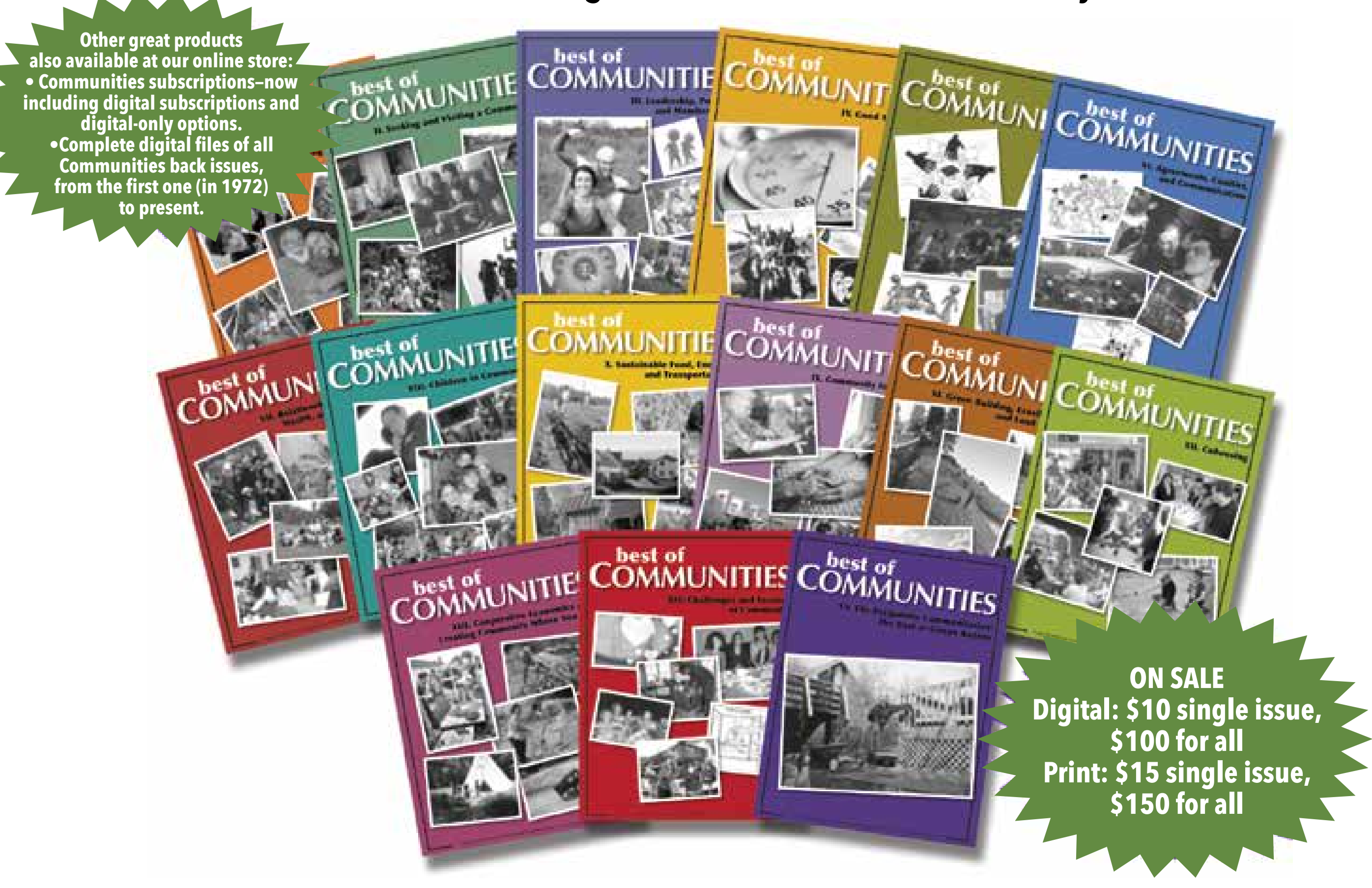

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While there are some classic pieces that date back to the '90s, the vast majority of the articles in The Best of Communities Bundle have been written in the past dozen years, representing cutting-edge thinking and how-to explorations of the social, ecological, and economic aspects of sustainable living. We've gathered insights about what you can expect when raising children in community, and offer a wealth of information about what it's like to grow old there, too. For dessert, we have the collected wisdom of over 50 essays from Geoph Kozeny (1949–2007), the Peripatetic Communitarian.

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Towards a Joyful Economics

By Helen Zuman

In fall 2013, I was living in an apartment in Brooklyn with my husband, our cat, and the 24-hour roar of the expressway next door. I'd recently peaked out of a graduate creative writing program, quit my job, and started on an overhaul of my memoir, funded by money not spent on grad school.

To complete my revision by the deadline I'd set, I needed to spend many hours per day alone—which would have been fine, except that when I emerged from seclusion (usually sometime in the afternoon) I had trouble finding company. Most people, including my husband, were at work. For money. Even evenings and weekends, I struggled against the sense that my friends were too busy for me, and shrank from the anxiety-ridden task of making appointments.

I dreaded having to sell my time for money again, once my savings ran out; I acknowledged my social starvation. And I noted a deep yearning for a new story of joyful contribution to a supportive community, enlivened by a stream of easy interaction.

Enter the Gift Circle—a pattern developed by Alpha Lo and friends in Fairfax, California and popularized by author and speaker Charles Eisenstein.

In *Sacred Economics* (Evolver Editions, 2011), Eisenstein offers both a glimpse of a life-serving economy based on gift and connection, and release from the belief that financial struggle bespeaks a character flaw. In his view, the economy as we know it—which creates money as debt—thrives on, and therefore rewards, extractive activity that turns the commons (air, water, soil, bodies, attention, culture, relationships) into cash. It wants us to clearcut a forest rather than preserve it for wildlife, to monocrop cattle feed rather than tend a biodynamic farm. However, he shows, it is possible to reverse monetization (aka "development") by feeding a sacred economy based on a shared belief in life as the original gift from which all bounty flows. Practicing mutuality—giving joyfully and prolifically to the whole—we can trust that it, in turn, will give to us.

In a Gift Circle—as described by Eisenstein in a piece for *YES!* magazine—a varying number of people come together to make requests and offers, and express gratitude, especially for gifts received through previous meetings. It sounded like a perfect way to gain company while reducing my need for money. Unable to find a Gift Circle already growing in Brooklyn, I decided I would start one.

• • •

The Brooklyn Gift Circle, hosted by the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture, met once a month, with a summer break, from February 2014 through June 2015—a total of 15 times. In all, more than 50 people attended at least one Circle; Circles ranged in size from two to 16. Gifts given included: A phone cord, a Kindle, an iPod. Magic mushrooms, basil plants, a poster painted by hand. Use of a saw, a planer, an expedition-sized backpack. Cat-sitting, housecleaning, healing bodywork. Counseling. Gardening and career advice. Help avoiding eviction and securing an apartment. Help with moving and household chores. A job as an arborist. A blind date that bloomed into a months-long relationship. A series of Craft Nights allowing us to mend, knit, whittle, paint, in company.

In each match, I rejoiced—but what mattered most to me were the ties formed between giver and receiver, the agape bred by our spiraling generosity. I saw that the Gift Circle, at its best, was friendship in reverse: Friends request and offer help within an existing sphere of knowledge and regard; Gift Circlers come to know and care for each other through requests and offers.

Yet when my husband and I left Brooklyn for Beacon, New York (a tiny city 70 miles up the Hudson), in spring 2015, I did not start a new Circle. Yes, I'd wearied of the administrative burden (posting and emailing announcements, making fliers, maintaining a mailing list, taking and circulating notes) and the screen time it required, and yes, Beacon had thriving Facebook groups facilitating hyperlocal hiring, buying, selling, trading, and giving away. But mostly I held back

Helen dumps a poop bucket, during a poo-torial.

Rio

Medicine Wheel sign.

Helen Zuman

Medicine Wheel House, with laundry.

Helen Zuman

The Medicine Wheel crew, June 2016.

Tiffany Ashley

Medicine Wheel kitchen.

Helen Zuman

because my original yearning had morphed into something more: a vision of a village where frequent, casual contact, combined with intimate knowing of needs and capacities, supported giving as a way—or at least a major part—of life. I both cherished this vision and dismissed it as impossibly distant.

It did not come up when a friend mentioned, at a sewing meetup, that she was planning a weekend trip to visit a mentor at Earthaven, an aspiring ecovillage of about 55 members on 330 acres in Black Mountain, North Carolina; what did come up was my curiosity about this community, which I'd first heard of while living at Zendik Farm, in nearby Mill Spring, in the early 2000s.

My five years at Zendik—during which I'd renounced the outside world, or "Deathculture," and surrendered self-trust—had turned me against group living; I was not planning on sharing a kitchen and bathroom with strangers ever again. But, having recently completed the final draft of my memoir, and the second season of a writing gig that had become my main source of income, I could afford to go on a jaunt, just because. I arranged to stay at Medicine Wheel, a collective house that often hosts visitors to Earthaven; my friend and I scheduled our journey for the first weekend in March.

• • •

What struck me first, when I stepped into Medicine Wheel's spacious kitchen/dining room, the morning we arrived, was a surge of warmth and welcome. Colorfully tiled counters, floors, and backsplashes, plus quirks like movable ceiling panels and a hot pink post rising through a central island, revealed the loving particularity—and exuberant peculiarity—with which this house had been built. South-facing windows let in floods of winter sun. Resting on the bench by the greenhouse door, after my friend had left for her mentor's place, I imbibed the blessed quiet, while noting all I wasn't hearing: The roar of engines. The blare of sirens. The hum, squawk, trill of people's electronic prostheses. I heard, instead, voices from the floor above, footsteps overhead. I felt the embrace of a space infused originally, then over and over, with the touch of human hands, the care of human hearts.

That evening I joined two residents and another visitor in preparing dinner, which we ate near the wood stove. Sharing food—as well as nourishing conversation—with these three women, all of them lively and present, I noticed, and lamented, how accustomed I'd grown to dining with just my husband, or alone.

Over the next couple days, I further observed that people seemed less hurried here, freer from distraction. That the lack of heating in bedrooms brought us together, in relaxed congress, around the fire. That the permanent residents, or core group, seemed both willing to invite others in and fully committed to stewarding their home.

Early Monday morning, shortly before leaving to return to Beacon, I listened (with permission) to Medicine Wheel's weekly meeting, during which residents check in, choose cooking and cleaning shifts, address house and kitchen concerns, discuss comings and goings, and so on. As they gathered 'round the stove, I saw that the imprint left by other such meetings (at Zendik, at my college co-op) was leading me to expect veiled hostility erupting into fiery accusation; deadlocks over petty conflicts; torturous meanders bound for dead ends. Ineffectuality branded as égalité, or crucifixion by hierarchy—I'd seen no middle path.

So I was delighted, in this meeting, to witness care for self, care for others, care for the whole. The check-ins, brief but not rushed, came from the heart. When voices rose in disagreement, those raising them were quick to step back, acknowledge the upset, seek its underlying cause. When one admitted to feeling overloaded, others offered relief. As the wall-mounted chalkboard at one end of the dining room filled with cooks, cleaners, projects, events, my heart filled with desire to belong to a body like this one.

• • •

At Earthaven, you can stay up to two weeks (as a guest) or at least two months (as a New Root). Sensing that, cicada-like, I was reviving the tribal dream that had led me to Zendik 17 years earlier, I rented a room at Medicine Wheel from late April through late June 2016, then returned for another two months in early December.

Each week, Medicine Wheel renters serve as chef for one dinner, and sous chef for another; take a turn tidying up, or day-cleaning, the main common areas; and spend two hours on tasks like gardening, gathering kindling, splitting wood, bringing order to a space suffering from clutter or neglect. Renters also do chores, like sweeping the pantry or cleaning a bathroom. (I volunteered to help process humanure—something I'd known about for years but never experienced.) In addition,

all New Roots owe Earthaven—the village encompassing Medicine Wheel and a dozen or so other neighborhoods—16 hours of service per month, which translates into 16 units of the community's currency (or CurrentSee), the Leap, usually valued at one hour of labor or 10 dollars.

To earn Leaps, I joined semiweekly work parties organized around projects like leveling a group campsite, revising campground signage, pulling up runaway honeysuckle, and weeding the flower beds flanking Earthaven's main gathering place, the Council Hall—then recorded my hours on my Leap sheet for the month. I also earned paper Leaps—which function like cash, rather than credit—by serving private entities within the village. For example, I sifted clay and repotted saplings at the Useful Plants Nursery, and weeded a strawberry patch bordering a fledgling orchard. Some paper Leaps I put towards my service requirement; others I spent on things like an organic cotton bra top made by the seamstress next door, a jar of pickled garlic scapes grown on site, and a series of homeopathy classes. The Leap, I found, has real value.

And I love how Leaps feel. There's a tradition—sporadically followed—of recording on the backs of paper Leaps the months and years of transactions, their nature, the parties involved. I was thrilled, early on, to receive a four-Leap note with entries dating back to Earthaven's infancy, in the mid-'90s. And I know, each time I earn or spend Leaps (motto: "In Each Other We Trust"), that I'm strengthening an economy allied with land and living beings—rather than a debt-based cancer programmed for biocide.

Which is not to say that Earthaven's economy is all joy and frogs and bunnies—it can't be, so long as the infinite growth myth continues to chomp the planet it's part of. While cash requirements can be fairly low—e.g., $200 per month for my room at Medicine Wheel, plus $230 for food and $35 in Earthaven fees—the few job opportunities on the land are either seasonal or extremely part-time. This means that most residents rely on some combination of savings, investment income, government benefits, work they must drive to, seasonal or occasional gigs far away, telecommuting, and their own entrepreneurial efforts. I've financed my stays at Earthaven by editing college admissions essays—something I can do anywhere, provided I have internet.

In the long term, Earthaveners may develop more village-based businesses and/or decrease cash needs by further shifting reliance from industrial civilization to each other and the land. Meanwhile, I do see upsides to the scarcity of steady employment: It encourages interaction with the wider world, promotes variety in life design, selects for ingenuity, and discourages the kind of financial dependence that can hinder those who are unhappy in a community from rejoining the mainstream.

• • •

Though economics has come to mean the study of monetary wealth, it is rooted in care of the home—a pursuit that can bring us together, or keep us apart.

In my city life, I mostly cook and clean alone. I pay to have my pee and poop funneled to a "treatment" plant where chemical additives turn it into toxic goop. For morale boosts while tidying and organizing, I rely on steady infusions of country music. Yes, I attend Monday-night sewing meetups, and show up for Weeding Wednesdays at Beacon's community farm. But, for the most part, I must make an appointment, if I wish to share work, or my heart, with someone other than my husband. This—combined with the omnipresence of screens as an intermediary or substitute for contact—primes me, still, for social malnutrition.

At Medicine Wheel, on the other hand, shared home care—in tandem with the absence of cell service and wireless internet—offers abundant opportunity for social nourishment. Cooking dinner for the house, I'm usually working with one or more partners, and chatting with whoever's around. While cleaning, I'm often hearing others' conversations, or holding one of my own. Before dumping my first poop bucket, as an apprentice poop harvester, I requested a play-by-play of what to expect from a veteran humanurist with whom I'd yet to make a strong connection; this was the beginning of a pootiful friendshit. And even when I work solo, on tasks requiring close concentration (like organizing our hailstorm of a tool room, or writing this piece), I feel tied to the whole. Each moment brims with chances to serve, connect, receive, know, and be known. To feed, and be fed by, an ever-growing gift-flow. ❧

Helen Zuman, writer and gift economist, tends her nodes in the web of relations while seeking a cure for social starvation. Mating in Captivity, *her memoir of five years at Zendik Farm, is due out from She Writes Press in Spring 2018. Raised in Brooklyn, she divides her time between Black Mountain, North Carolina and Beacon, New York. Visit her online at helenzuman.com.*

Circling up before Medicine Wheel dinner.

Helen Zuman

Lettuces in the Medicine Wheel greenhouse.

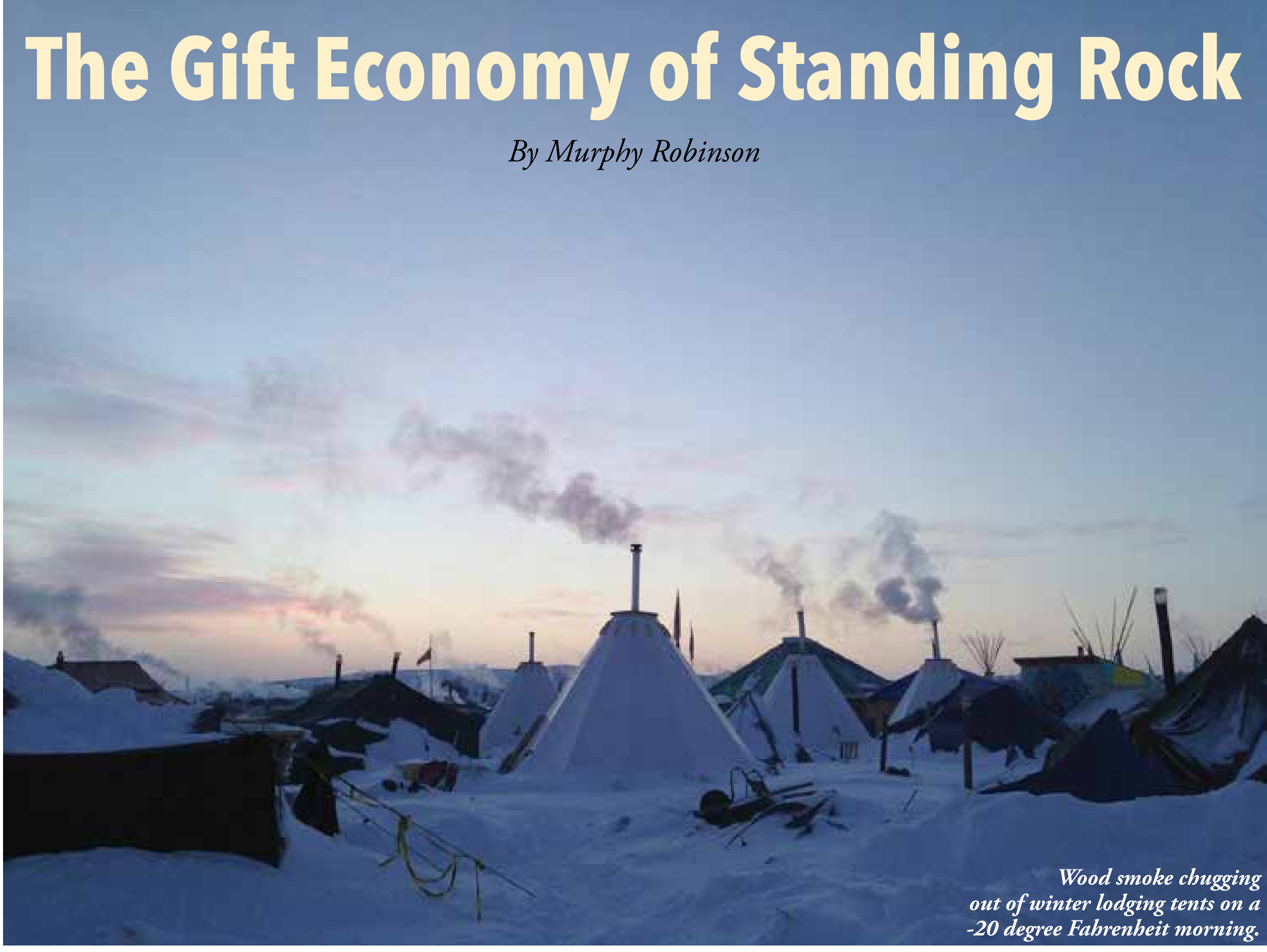
Helen Zuman

Medicine Wheel kitchen.

Helen Zuman

The Gift Economy of Standing Rock

By Murphy Robinson



Wood smoke chugging out of winter lodging tents on a -20 degree Fahrenheit morning.

In only a few months, a small encampment of a few Lakota people dedicated to protecting the Missouri River from the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) became the center of international attention, swelled to house up to 14,000 people at its peak in early December 2016, and was supported entirely by volunteers and countless donations of both money and goods.

Many people from around the US and beyond traveled to North Dakota to support this fight for indigenous sovereignty, treaty rights, and environmental justice. Residents of the resistance camps existed within a capitalism-free zone, where nothing was for sale and everything from delicious meals to winter camping gear to expert medical care was available for free.

I first visited Standing Rock in early November 2016, and returned to spend five weeks in late December and January volunteering as a white ally to the indigenous "Water Protectors." I spent my days splitting firewood, cooking meals, installing woodstoves, doing small carpentry projects, shoveling snow, sharpening chainsaws, doing dishes, and—on one rare occasion—livestreaming footage of police violence from the frontlines. During both visits I lived at Oceti Sakowin Camp, the largest of the three Water Protector camps and the location closest to the front lines of the fight against the pipeline. Oceti Sakowin is made up of many smaller camps organized by tribal group and other themes, and I quickly found a home at Two Spirit Nation, a community of two-spirit, queer, and transgender Water Protectors from many different indigenous nations, as well as their non-indigenous allies.

Most of my observations here will center on the deep winter weeks at Oceti Sakowin Camp, when nighttime temperatures regularly hit -25 degrees Fahrenheit, daytime temperatures sometimes failed to creep above zero, and cold winds whipped the open plain. The gift economies of direct action camps and festivals are easier to fathom in warm months, but during this period we all depended on the gift economy for our daily survival in a very real way. It's notable that as of my departure in late January, not one person had died at the camps—compare this to large urban centers in cold states that see regular deaths from hypothermia among the houseless population under similar conditions.

Lin Migiziikwe Gokee-Rindal, an Anishinaabe Water Protector, was impressed with the collaborative culture at the camps. She reflects that she was "touched and inspired by the ways in which the people showed up for each other and how people in close proximity quickly became family. In harsh conditions and under extreme circumstances, a culture of mutual aid and a framework of traditional Lakota values...led to a thriving and close-knit community."

What did this gift economy provide for us?

•Housing. The winterized camp consisted of many army tents, wall tents, tipis, yurts, and a few tiny houses and RVs. Nearly all were heated with woodstoves, sometimes supplemented with small propane heaters. Most people slept on cots padded with several sleeping pads. You had to know someone at camp to get housing easily, but in an emergency you could spend one night in the warming tent maintained 24 hours a day near the Medic station. Arctic sleeping bags and endless piles of blankets were readily available for free if you hadn't been able to bring your own. Residents in each structure took turns stoking the woodstove throughout the night.

• Food. Some camps had their own kitchens that would cook two or three meals a day, but there were also several public kitchens in the camp

that would feed anyone who walked in their doors looking for food. All the kitchens were staffed entirely by volunteers and stocked with donated ingredients. Meat is a staple of the Lakota diet, and I ate many meals of deer, buffalo, and elk meat donated by local hunters and ranchers. Sometimes we'd get a chance to eat Indian Frybread Tacos and other local specialties. At Two Spirit Nation, we had two sizable tents full of canned goods, granola bars, butter and cheese, pasta and crackers, tea and hot cocoa, meat and fish, and endless boxes of winter squash and root vegetables. Much of it was from organic farmers from Maine to Oregon, who had donated their extra crops to support the cause. Even in late January we still had enough food to feed our 15-person camp for another few months...or at least until the first real thaw, when all the frozen meat and produce would go bad.

• **Water.** When it never gets above freezing, liquid water becomes a commodity. A heated water truck would make the rounds of camp most days, and small groups with access to a car would fill up five-gallon jugs offsite. The trick was keeping them unfrozen, so we usually kept them in the living spaces, which we heated around the clock with woodstoves. Melted snow was used only for dishwater, since persistent rumors circulated about harmful chemicals being sprayed in the atmosphere over our camps (as of this writing, there is no reliable scientific evidence to support this).

• **Sanitation.** Oceti Sakowin Camp boasted two composting toilet tents. Each large army tent contained 15 stalls, with two attendants supervising them 24 hours a day. The attendants kept the tent heated with a woodstove, and changed the compost bags when the bucket in a stall got close to being full of sawdust, toilet paper, and human waste. One side of each tent was reserved for "Moon Stalls" where tampons, pads, and baby wipes were always available in each stall. The toilet system was one of the most organized parts of the camp, although exactly where our compost was going to go after it left camp in those nice biodegradable bags remained somewhat mysterious.

• **Security and Fire Response.** An indigenous security team equipped with two-way radios monitored the two gates of camp 24 hours a day, and did patrols around camp. A second Women's Security team was formed in response to several assaults at the camp, and maintained a safe housing space for women and two-spirit people. Three or four times during my stay, we woke in the middle of the night to people yelling "FIRE!" and rushed to the scene of a blazing tipi or shack, probably set afire by poor woodstove management. While these fires were too far along for our small fire extinguishers to make a difference, there was usually a person in full firefighter gear present who could probably have rescued anyone stuck inside. While the victims of these fires generally lost everything, they could easily get a new set of winter clothes and a new arctic sleeping bag from the donations available in camp.

• **Medical Care.** The Medic Wellness Area boasted winterized yurts and tipis for doctors and street medics, herbalists, bodyworkers and acupuncturists, midwives, and mental health workers. All these services were available at no charge. A licensed doctor was usually on duty in the medical yurt, and there were free-for-the-taking stations for herbal tea, fire cider, basic medical supplies, hygiene items, and condoms. At the time when I departed, three healthy babies had been delivered at camp, and the medics had handled countless front-line injuries from rubber bullets, chemical weapons, concussion grenades, and water cannons.

• **Fuel and Firewood.** Firewood was consistently the most sought-after commodity in camp. Somehow regular deliveries of whole logs consistently showed up, and each camp would send a few people with a chainsaw and truck or sled to get wood for the day. The general rule was to cut enough wood for your camp, and then cut some more and leave it for people who didn't have a chainsaw. We all split the wood back at camp, and took turns stocking all the heated structures for the day. Every Saturday a propane truck arrived and filled our empty canisters with fuel for cooking and heating. I suspect these deliveries were paid for out of larger donation funds administered by Oceti Sakowin Camp or the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe.

• **Winter Gear.** Endless bags of donated clothing and bedding arrived at Standing Rock during October, November, and December. Much of it was unsuitable for arctic conditions, but there was enough high-quality gear to outfit the winter crew of Water Protectors (about 600 people) several times over. Anyone could visit the donation tents at any time and take anything they wanted.

• **Tools.** Each smaller camp had an assortment of tools, and there was also a large construction building that would loan out any power tool you could think of as long as you left your ID with them as collateral. They provided everything from electric drills to ladders to chainsaws to a sewing machine. They also had 2x4s, particle board, and screws that you could ask for, and they'd give you what you needed if you could show them a sensible construction plan and materials list.

• **Spiritual Leadership and Ceremony.** There were a few heated gathering spaces of different sizes that hosted everything from daily prayer circles to a huge Christmas Eve dinner with traditional singing and drumming. There were also several sweat lodges that any indigenous spiritual leader could use for the traditional Lakota Inipi ceremony of prayer, healing, and purification.

• **Use Your Imagination...** The abundance of physical donations led to a lot of things being creatively repurposed. My buddy and I cut up donated sweatshirts to make crocheted rugs for the living spaces, and unraveled donated sweaters to produce yarn to knit extra-warm wool underwear. I pulled from the scrap pile outside the construction building to build shelves in our living space, and countless donated blankets were used to seal out the draught in winterized tipis. Whatever you needed, there was probably a way to make it with the tools and materials available at camp.

The gift economy at Standing Rock manifested itself according to the principles of indigenous

Highway sign.

In the warmer months, the Art Tent printed banners and signs for all to use at the actions.

culture. The Lakota people name generosity and compassion as two of their core values, and I saw those values in action every day. Much of the system depended on each group taking just enough for their own short-term needs, and leaving the rest for others. At home my instinct is to stockpile what I need for my own survival (two years' supply of dry firewood, etc.), but that sort of strategy has its roots in the questionable idea that individual survival is possible without collective survival. In the capitalist economy of mainstream culture, it's common for one household to thrive while an adjacent one is struggling to meet its basic needs. Houseless people freeze to death huddled next to spacious and luxuriously heated buildings inhabited by more "successful" folks.

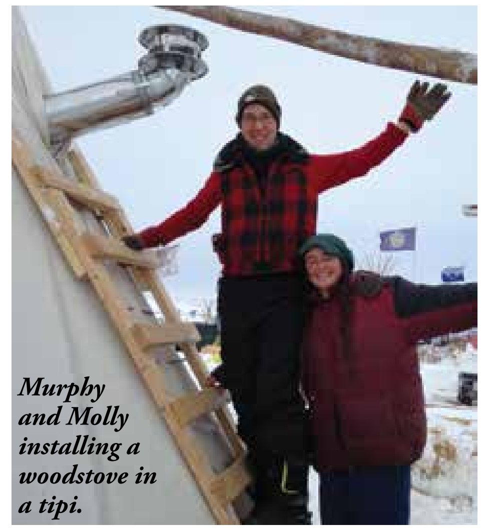
In contrast, at Standing Rock we defined success as our collective survival. Therefore we took just the firewood that we needed, checked on the elders every day, brought food and coffee from our kitchen to the compost toilet attendants, and helped anyone who asked us for assistance. This culture of abundance seemed logical and easy in a situation where our needs for survival were simple and a steady flow of money and donated goods was pouring in all the time. I couldn't help but wonder what it would take to create a steady-state gift economy, which could exist without these flows from the outside capitalist world.

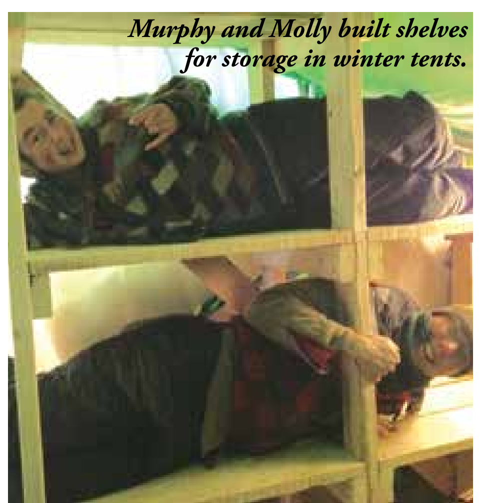
When I finally left Standing Rock my friend and I stopped at a co-op food store in Minneapolis to obtain some much-dreamed-of fresh vegetables to munch on. It was such a shock to be asked to pay for food again. It made me wonder what it would take for our larger society to turn its ship around and set a course for a more generous and compassionate form of economy. It seems that these values arise in us spontaneously when a natural disaster hits and we are suddenly in a survival situation, such as Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans or Hurricane Sandy in New York City. The rest of the time, our whole economy depends on a me-first, get-ahead value system based on competition and survival of the fittest (or, in a rigged system like ours, the most privileged). When luxuries and conveniences become symbols of status, we tend to become self-serving.

When people become passionate enough about collective survival, luxuries and conveniences lose their appeal. How can we help each other prioritize our collective well-being? How can we encourage ourselves to expand our definition of "the collective" to include the Lakota concept of "all my relations": the four-leggeds, the winged ones, the stone people, the star people? When we listen to the prayers of indigenous people and orient our values in this ancient way, the path to a truly sustainable gift economy can unfold before us.

For further reading on pre-colonization economic history and gift economy theory, see The Indigenous People's History of the United States *by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and* Sacred Economics *by Charles Eisenstein.*

Murphy Robinson is a wilderness guide, hunting instructor, and founder of Mountainsong Expeditions in Vermont. She lives in a Tiny House on a community organic farm in the mountains. You can contact her through her website, www.mountainsongexpeditions.com.


Murphy and Molly installing a woodstove in a tipi.


Murphy and Molly built shelves for storage in winter tents.

Dawn over the Native Nations flags on Flag Road.

Dawn over Oceti Sakowin camp in January.

Photos courtesy of Murphy Robinson

Participatory Budgeting in an Income-Sharing Community

By Adder Oaks

Sharing income among a hundred people is a formidable challenge. At Twin Oaks Community, the combination of income-sharing and egalitarianism forms the core of community identity. About 90 adult members and over a dozen children live together on our rural farm in Virginia that is Twin Oaks. All of the money we make we share, not by dividing it up evenly, but rather by using our collective resources to meet the individual needs of all members. It is the combination of sharing our resources and having a fair say in how those resources are used that brings community cohesion and a shared direction. But it is a logistical headache and often a political nightmare to work out how exactly to allocate these shared resources. A couple years into my membership at Twin Oaks, I joined the economic planning team just in time for a revamp of our community budgeting process. The decades-old process was ailing, suffering from a lack of participation and impact of individual voters. Many members felt that their vote did not make a difference. After several years of trial and error, twists and turns, arguments and animosity, pizza parties and free cookies, we are finally settling on something that works well.

Twin Oaks has a long history of Participatory Budgeting, a democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget.[1] For us, the public budget includes both money from our businesses and the non-business work we expect our members to do. Twin Oaks values its internal labor as much as it values its money. Not only is our labor keeping the community businesses such as hammock crafting and tofu production afloat, but it serves invaluably in our domestic lives. The time that members spend cooking dinner, harvesting wood for heat, growing food, teaching children, and scheduling doctor visits are all considered to be contributions to the community just as is our income-producing work. All work is compensated with "labor credits" which are self-reported and are required to meet the work quota of 42 hours per week (on average). Each year we take a look at both the income we have available and the number of hours we collectively expect to work and make a plan about where that money will go and where we'll spend our time. With a net annual income of about $700,000 and nearly 200,000 hours of labor, this is no small task.

For years the community used a process dubbed the Trade-Off Game. Unless one is a budgeting nerd like myself, this process is less fun than the name suggests. Each participating member, which was anyone interested, would be given a list of different managerial areas and the resources available (money and hours). Playing the "game" meant coming up with a balanced money budget and a balanced labor budget. One might assign $12,000 to building maintenance, $65,000 to food, $500 to recreation, 450 hours to cooking community meals, 8000 hours to the vegetable garden, 2000 hours to building maintenance, and so on. As long as the total money and hours matched those available, the player's game was valid. Everyone's games would be averaged together to produce the final budget.

Having each person set up a balanced budget is arduous and we would never get the participation, let alone a sensible budget, if we insisted that each person make such a detailed analysis. So we seeded the game with a planner take, a sensible budget offered by a small group made up of the economic planning team, the labor manager, and the current members of our rotating board of directors, along with one or two members at large. Everyone would then tweak the planner take, boosting or cutting the budgets as they saw fit, making sure to cut a dollar from one area for each dollar added to another. Caps were instituted as a precaution to avoid coming out with a budget that is too wonky to fit the community, requiring that no player could vote to cut or raise an area by more than 20 percent.

Inevitably, the final budget would come quite close to the planner take each year, leaving players scratching their heads as to how their participation mattered. Even worse, dishonest play was implicitly encouraged. I might want the food budget dropped by 10 percent, but I can bet someone else will vote to raise it. So what do I do? Vote to cut it by 20 percent to balance them out. In fact, I might cut a large area that I actually like if I know others will vote to raise it. That will leave me with lots of money to distribute among the small areas I support. The Trade-Off Game quickly became an exercise in strategic play, rather than a process for determining the actual desires of the community. Was this what egalitarian income-sharing was supposed to look like?

When I joined the economic planning team in 2013, revamping the game was an idea already brewing. We had seen a record low in participation with a mere 11 members playing (out of over 90 adult members) and the team had already put out surveys trying to figure out why exactly people did not seem invested in determining where our shared resources go. Enough members had expressed willingness to try a new process that we felt we had to look seriously into what other strategies we might use.

This was an exciting introduction to the team. I had studied mathematics in college but had no real training in economics or budgeting. I was also still relatively new to Twin Oaks, just starting to feel at home enough that it made sense for me to be one of the people guiding the community through this budgeting process. I was still learning the ins and outs of our finances while simultaneously brainstorming for a way to do things that would be truly democratic. I was part of the team working to more fully actualize the ideals of my home. We hoped that we could come up with a system that would get people to participate, enjoy it, understand more fully our community needs, and share our resources in a way that truly reflected communal desires. Voting systems might not be the thing that gets most people's hearts racing, but I felt inspired by the possibility of meeting such a democratic ideal.

Our solution came to us in a system that had

Skylar and Nina dress up for our annual Beltane festival.

already been introduced to Twin Oaks: Fair Share Voting (FSV).[2] FSV is a powerful voting system that is ideal for allocating shared resources, yet it is woefully unheard of. It is a ranked voting system, much like the Instant Runoff Voting that gained some attention during the 2016 presidential election season. Third-party candidates support ranked voting systems because they allow voters to put their true preference at the top of the list without running the risk of wasting their vote. If that candidate is not a finalist, then the ballot will be considered a vote for their second favorite option, and so on down the line.

Fair Share Voting works the same way, but is used when trying to allocate a certain quantity of resources to some set of proposed projects, each with its own proposed budget, whether large or small. Each person ranks their choices, but each ballot is represented by an equal share of resources. If 10 people are using FSV to allocate $10,000, then each ballot is essentially allocating $1000. A player who ranks a small project as their top vote will spend less of their initial voting power, measured in dollars, than someone who ranks at the top a bigger project, even when those two projects both get high rankings from other voters. And the more people that vote for an area, the less is spent by each person, since the cost required to fund a project is shared among the ballots that ranked it high enough. But if a voter's top-ranked choice is not supported by others, then the tally will consider the next item on their ballot without them having wasted a vote on a loser. And even if they voted for a winner, their ballot can still fund items further down in ranking as long as there are still dollars left on the ballot. Majority support does not mean only majority funding. Most of the money goes to the areas the majority supported, but a large minority may use its share to fund other projects.

Twin Oaks has used Fair Share Voting to vote on one-time project allocations in the past, but adapting FSV for ongoing budgets was a different beast altogether. So many of our programs would not make sense if their budgets happened to be voted way up one year and way down the next year. Take the dairy program, for example. We have so many cows, so many calves born over the course of the year, and expect a certain amount of milk from them. If the program gets cut one year in both our labor and money contribution, what will we do? Sell a bunch of the cows? Let the lactating cows go? What if it gets funded back to its usual amount the following year? Do we then buy ourselves a new herd? We needed a way to give the membership direct influence on these ongoing budgets while respecting the fact that they are ongoing and long-term. We decided that we, those administering the budgeting process, would set absolute minimums on all the community budgets. That way people would still rank all of the areas at the levels they wished them to be funded, but even an area that no one ranked would still get the minimum funding required to maintain the infrastructure of the community. Armed with this clever implementation of FSV, we were ready to reinvigorate community involvement in budgeting.

Of course, increasing participation is not as simple as saying "Hey! Check out this new voting system! It's so cool, you won't believe it!" Few members think about our budgets on a day-to-day basis, let alone the details of our budgeting process. For the first time in my life, I found myself employed in something of a PR campaign. I was making signs and posters, writing papers for our discussion board, and talking up this new process as much as I could. Many members were skeptical of such a shift, so I did what I could to assuage their fears (and did not completely succeed with some). Even more members, however, remained apathetic. Whether they played or not, they argued, the most important needs of Twin Oaks would be prioritized. We're not going to let our buildings fall apart or see ourselves starve because too few people put a vote in for those areas. "I just don't care," I heard way too many times. "Whatever people decide will be fine."

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The fact is, people do care. Spend a day on the farm listening to people and you will hear comments about our budgets all over the place. "I can't believe we spend so much money to put

Photo courtesy of Adder Oaks

Adder, Puck, Anni, Megan, Kami at a budgeting summit.

Sunya Marguiles

berries and nuts in our granola." "Why can't I claim labor credits for the time it takes me to drive to the doctor?" "Damn, I'm glad we decided to buy those new solar panels." Our annual budgeting process might not be on the mind of those making such utterances, but they are talking about the resource allocation determined by just that process.

The solution to getting people to turn up for this new voting game was simple: pizza. We turned the game into a series of pizza parties. Members would show up and we would have the electronic ballots pulled up on community computers and personal laptops. People would cast their vote while eating pizza, and we would be there to answer any questions about how to interface with the ballot and how the votes would be tallied. This strategy worked remarkably well. (Disturbingly well, I might think. Is pizza really a stronger motivator than our shared economy?) Those of us on the econ team were quite happy with ourselves, content with a job well done. That is, until we tallied the results.

It turns out that our implementation of FSV was setting ourselves up for disaster, a disaster which manifested. We were not realistic about setting minimum budgets. We looked at the results of some areas and said to ourselves "Sure, the community won't fall apart, but are we really ready to operate with a food budget cut in half? We're going to be eating a lot of rice and beans." As much as we tried to educate all the players, it was hard for them to really see the impact of their voting choices. Many ballots used up their shares in the top few areas, leaving several areas severely bloated and many more unrealistically meager. The members also felt fatigued by the game, having to rank every single area. We have well over a hundred areas to budget for, ranging from food to bike maintenance to local relations. The budgeting team ended up taking the results and editing them heavily. We came up with a balanced budget that worked well enough, and when we shared it with the community no one balked. But the democratic ideal we were aiming for was missed by a long shot.

Our next several economic planning meetings felt pretty depressing. We had spent a good half of a year getting ourselves and the community amped up about a new revolutionary voting process that would change everything. And then it failed. We seriously considered scrapping FSV altogether and returning to the Trade-Off Game. We knew that the latter would never really provide the egalitarian input we strove for, but it was within the comfort zone of the community. Would they support yet another revamp?

Thankfully, our disappointment in our first attempt to use Fair Share Voting subsided. Rather than scrap it, we decided to tackle the problem of ongoing budgets from a different angle, while still preserving FSV. Rather than using voting to build each budget from scratch or an absolute minimum each year, we would propose budgets that reflect the status quo and use FSV to adjust them. If providing status quo services leaves us with extra cash or hours, we would vote on which areas to bump up. We could also use the adjustment when status quo would leave us lacking cash or hours, which might happen if our businesses do not do as well as previous years, baseline costs such as energy or insurance go up, or the working population of the community is expected to be low. FSV works much the same in this case, except that it is used to vote for cuts; areas that one would most be willing to see reduced are ranked at the top. Each player's fair share is made up of "negative dollars," and everyone is required to rank enough areas to ensure that the necessary cuts will be made.

Is pizza really a stronger motivator than our shared economy?

The past three years, we have used this method of budgeting, which we call The Adjustment Game. We meet and set status quo budgets, decide whether we need add games or cut games, come up with a list of areas that could be supplemented or reduced, and present those areas to the community to vote on. We have continued at times to use pizza, cookies, and coffee to motivate people to play. But the game is becoming more routine now. We do not have to re-explain every bit and contrast it against the old system. The new system is the standard now. And it's doing what we

Janel and Steve talk at our annual Anniversary celebration.

Photo courtesy of Adder Oaks

Keenan and Christian prepare for a wasp battle.

Photo courtesy of Adder Oaks

hoped for: it provides real opportunity for the membership to directly influence budgets in a fair way, is an easy enough ballot to understand that everyone can play, and creates community buy-in for our collective budgets.

However, I hesitate as I write such optimistic words, knowing that this will be read by the members of my community. The fact is, not everyone feels empowered by our budgeting process. Each year when new budgets are set, there are always some who denounce the results. It is tempting for me to wave off these concerns, chalking them up to the grumps who didn't get their way. The long-term members who spent years doing it the old way just don't want to adjust. The new area manager is simply annoyed that the other members are not excited about their project. Another member has personal animosity toward another and is using this opportunity to play out social drama.

But I have to take their concerns seriously. As much as we try to democratize the process, the fact is that those administering the game do have considerable sway. We have to ask ourselves questions such as, "How exactly do we determine what budgets represent the status quo?" "Which areas do we consider up for adjustments in years where we have to cut?" "Are we really making the game easy and accessible to all?" These are important questions that require close examination. We will continue to examine them and continue to tweak the game in years to come.

While each budgeting cycle brings in some grumbling, the nature of that grumbling is beginning to shift. It used to be complaints that the process did not make sense, that one's vote did not count, that it was either too confusing or too simple to be useful. Now I hear complaining about the votes themselves. Some are shocked that we voted to bump up personal spending allowance over low-cost community services, such as shared musical instruments for community performances. Others retort that allowance has been too low for too long, and the music is just a pet project for some. Another chimes in that our food budget should take precedence over either concern if we really want to have a healthy and varied diet. This is what we want. Our budgets may be controversial, but they are engaging. The apathy is past. Our economic planning does matter and people know it. We might just be getting closer to that democratic ideal.

Adder Oaks has been a member of Twin Oaks Community in Louisa, Virginia for six years. Sharing his life and income with a hundred others, he works as an economic planner, tutor, and parent. Adder is co-host of the podcast Commune Dads.

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1. Definition from the Participatory Budgeting Project, www.participatorybudgeting.org.
2. For a detailed description of Fair Share Voting, please visit: bit.ly/2lnE3xw.

Grace and Claire.

Photo courtesy of Adder Oaks

Stephan, Lindsey, Adder, Anni, Megan, Kami at a budgeting summit.

Sunya Marguiles

Sabrina and Nina repaint the original farmhouse.

Photo courtesy of Adder Oaks

Servant Leadership in Cooperative Business: STIRRING IT UP AT EAST WIND NUT BUTTERS

By Sumner Nichols

East Wind Community is a founding member of the Federation of Egalitarian Communities (FEC) in the hills of the Ozarks. East Wind Nut Butters, founded in 1981, is equally owned and operated by the members of East Wind Community and is currently its dominant source of income. East Wind Nut Butters produces peanut, almond, cashew, and sesame seed butters. East Wind Community is composed of 73 members who live on over 1000 acres of beautifully forested land.

Here I am again, sitting at a desk dazed by a big bright monitor. Scrutinizing spreadsheets. Writing emails. Staring at the weather. How did I allow this to happen? I came to East Wind to get away from all this, didn't I? That is what I thought I wanted, at least. Of course, everything besides the familiar humming of a computer and the ringing of phones is different.

After graduating from the honors business school at Indiana University in 2012 I didn't have many plans. While my friends sought higher education and high paying jobs I had little interest in either. Disillusioned with the state of the world and the society I grew up in I came to desire an alternative to what I was observing on a daily basis. Three years and some Google searches later my discovery of IC.org led me to schedule visitor periods at East Wind and Twin Oaks.

In March of 2015 I made the two-day bus journey towards southern Missouri to make my intrepid first visit to a fully income-sharing community. A month before, my year stint as a secretary for a small family business ended when I decided to pursue this incredibly different path. That tiny amount of time spent in the office workforce of America proved to be invaluable in the role I was soon to fill.

Nearly immediately I fell in love with East Wind. The land, the people, the sense of opportunity and promise. After visiting East Wind and Twin Oaks for "official" visitor periods and checking a number of places in between I knew that East Wind was where I wanted to be.

I lived and labored at East Wind for about seven months as a "working guest on the waiting list." Essentially this meant that because the membership of East Wind was at its legislated full capacity of 73 people I had to wait to become a member. Benefits such as having a room, receiving a $150 dividend each month and full medical coverage did not apply to me. However, I also was not beholden to the rules concerning working for East Wind's dominant business: East Wind Nut Butters. All members who wish to receive their monthly dividend must work a set number of hours (the "Industrial Quotient" or simply "IQ") each week. This number is determined by the General Management Team of the business and ranges from zero to eight. I was not required and in fact was discouraged from working IQ hours during my time as a working guest.

For a young man looking to learn about food production and homesteading this could not have been a better arrangement. East Wind's weekly labor quota is 35 hours. These hours can manifest from gardening, cow milking, building maintenance, cooking, cleaning, working in the business ("IQ" hours), and a plethora of other things that community values as useful labor. Without the burden of having to work in the business (I worked just three factory shifts in the first seven months I lived at East Wind) I was free to pursue passions known and unknown. Gardening, woodworking, cow milking, cart building and maintenance, and food processing consumed both my mind and body. I could not get enough and learned more practical skills than I had in my 24 years prior.

This time was precious. Finding friends. Bonding with an amazing new partner. Coming into my own as an adult. Easing into the idea of East Wind being home. My existence was relatively carefree and I was grateful to have found such a special place. Not being a member meant that no serious responsibilities fell upon my shoulders.

Often, while sitting at this desk in front of this ridiculous screen, I am reminded of my college days. Listening to Ratatat, Beethoven, anything nonlyrical really and reading, studying, analyzing. Except this is an actual challenge. This is the real world. Decisions with consequences. Responsibility and accountability to oneself and others. No grades, just results and outcomes. I am a manager.

Photos courtesy of Sumner Nichols

I am an entrepreneur. These are the roles I play at East Wind. A business with three million dollars in sales a year can't exist long without a group of people taking on particular niches and holding such positions to maintain stability and continuity.

An active sales manager and a vision of where the business was heading were desperately needed when I first began working in the office for Nut Butters. Everything else was already in place. Delicious and nutritious nut butters made fresh in daily batches. A production team composed of experienced and talented individuals working together to manufacture tried and true, simple and wholesome, one- and two-ingredient products. A meticulously managed warehouse full of almond, cashew, peanut, and sesame seed butter. An established regional brand with an impeccable food safety record.

East Wind Nut Butters was doing everything right in terms of producing high quality staple foods, but its major failing was in being sluggishly responsive to an increasingly competitive health food market. In 1981, when the business was founded, all-natural and organic peanut butter was a true novelty. Look at your grocery store shelf today and you'll see that today's market is saturated with more nut butter brands and varieties than ever before. All-natural, organic, claims of "Superfood!," etc. abound. It's easy for a small brand that relies on word of mouth and that barely advertises to get lost in all the marketing noise.

One of the first decisions I made after being elected as the General Manager and Sales Manager of Nut Butters was to change our label vendor. Going with a smaller, more local printer reduced costs significantly and also made changing the labels less of a hassle. East Wind has always relied on the quality of their products and word of mouth to maintain business. I liked that the advertising budget was incredibly minimal. I don't like the idea of "selling" someone on something they don't need. However, marketing nutritious staple foods to the general public is sufficiently palatable to my ethical standards. Making clear on our labels why East Wind Nut Butters is different than the other brands was a top priority. "Single Ingredient: 100% US grown Valencia peanuts." This phrase would have meant very little to me two years ago. Until recently I was unaware of the fact that most peanuts are imported from China and India and that there are many different varieties of peanuts. The nice thing about US-grown Valencia peanuts is that when you roast and mill them they make a nice, thick, nutrient-dense peanut butter. With Chinese peanuts there is a need to add things like palm oil, hydrogenated oil, excess salt, and sugar to make the peanut butter something a person might actually find tasty, though still not something a health-conscious person would want to put in their body.

Making slight changes to our labels is a relatively small decision in the grand scheme of things. What about expanding business?

A larger facility and new products? Radically changing the business model? These are all considerations that any entrepreneur thinks about. When to scale up. When to drop products and when to introduce new ones. All of these bigger decisions have a context. Context is of the upmost importance for *any* business. I am one of 73 equal owners in this business. I am not a Silicon Valley cowboy with angel investors and a dream. Keeping a level head close to the Earth is my top asset. Any big project needs to be thoroughly thought out in the full context of East Wind. More than that, it needs to be effectively communicated if it is ever to become a reality.

If you want to make a major organizational change and have this change be effective you need to communicate clearly to those who will be affected. Such an effort cannot be a top-down, out-of-the-blue affair. Constantly eliciting feedback and figuring out the priorities of a community of 73 people takes a lot of time and energy. Communication attempted by an individual to an entire community can be difficult and it is in this realm that I still have much to learn. Patience and planning are prerequisite to any ambitious endeavor in this setting.

East Wind meetings can be boring by their very nature. No one intends them to be, of course. They require a lot of deliberation, and involve long spans of waiting to speak. The standard meeting, in which we rotate through single speakers talking and everyone else listening, is not the most efficient way of discussing a multifaceted idea. Redundancy and tangential lines of thought quickly dampen any sense of momentum. On occasion, I am reminded of how I felt during Occupy Bloomington circles.

Typically, less than a third of the community is in attendance for community meetings. All meetings must be proposed by a member of the community and 10 percent of all members must sign the proposal to get the meeting scheduled. At some points in the year there will be no meetings “on the stack” and weeks go by without having an “official” community meeting. At other points there is a lengthy list of issues—policies on how common spaces are used, an idea to repurpose a defunct building, policies on pets—and very consistent weekly meetings. Many meetings see less than a third of the community participate. Not everyone cares to spend an afternoon talking about things that may not affect their lives much.

The most contentious issues and votes are the most well-attended. Budget meetings and membership votes pique plenty of people’s interest, but even for these I’ve learned to expect no more than half of the community to be in attendance. The format of the meeting, the weather on the day of the meeting, and the location of the meeting have a significant impact on how many people attend and how productive the meeting is. The meeting format at East Wind that has become commonplace is by no means set in stone and those with the energy and the will find more creative ways of percolating their ideas through the collective East Wind conscience. Exploring this art can be vexing. I have come to believe that the commune setting is the ultimate teacher due to its all-encompassing scope. How can humans live with each other? What type of society are we shaping? How are we to live?

Leaders here are servants, and servants are leaders. I am one of many and in this I find comfort.

Such considerations are rarely given much time or energy in the majority of the corporate world. Really simple ideas like growth and monetary profit dominate. By ignoring the living Earth and the interests of others it becomes possible to make decisions that are close-to-optimal through that limited lens. It’s easy when you look at numbers on a spreadsheet and all you have to do is maximize profit. Clearcut rainforest and cheap palm oil, abused workers and cheap imports—if you don’t see these things and don’t think about these things then it is easy to go about your day in a society that rewards you for your “success.” The ability to deny is a strong evolutionary trait. It exists within all of us. It can allow us to make sense of this world. It can allow us to make sense of this world in the worst ways. Feeding into these habits is a culture founded upon endless growth and destruction; a culture of convenience and consumption; a technoutopia of iPhone cults and pick-your-own realities created by a web of social media platforms.

Forgive my digression. Where I came from, what I was born *into* reminds me of what I wish to avoid passing down to succeeding generations. My motivation is in building something; build-

ing upon an inheritance that many lay claim to. We stand on the shoulders of giants. My contribution to this legacy, whether footnote or volume, remains to be seen. The manner in which I manage East Wind Nut Butters defines me, both externally and internally, whether I like it or not. Respect for a job well done is accepted awkwardly. Scorn for a mistake, typically self-inflicted, is not taken lightly. The trap of thinking that my work in the business is, in isolation, my most important role in community is an easy one to fall into.

The delusions of grandeur that consume my ego at times are not always useful. A solid block of manual labor working in the garden or a grounded conversation with a fellow communard soon alleviates the problem. For this relief I am grateful. Ambition that is constantly checked is potently transformative. This has been my experience at East Wind. Leaders here are servants, and servants are leaders. I am one of many and in this I find comfort. We live to serve. It sounds religious or like a corporate tagline, but the sentiment is sound. Serving each other. Serving your landbase and watershed. Serving the living systems that allow for your existence.

What is it to lead in community? It is subtle. It is pronounced. It is the patience and foresight to wait for the right time and let energies flow organically. Generally, people want to help and people want to make things happen. For the biggest projects it is a matter of anticipating the roadblocks and the bottlenecks and eliminating or reducing them to maintain high participation and morale. My two years at East Wind have been sufficient to accumulate a small amount of wisdom on the matter. Two more will bring a greater grasp. Everything in due time.

As I sit here at this desk listening to Washed Out and finishing up an email by click clacking on the keyboard I take a break to stare out the window and ponder possible futures. I have never experienced such optimism and passion for life. Total engagement. This weird and wonderful place, this income-sharing commune has provided the environment, the proper context, for my potential to become kinetic. Where am I? Where is East Wind? Where shall we head?

Sumner is a 26-year-old white male attempting to live a moral life in an age of decline. He desires to create and build. Gardening, cow milking, maintaining East Wind's fleet of hand carts, and dishwashing are some of his favorite labors. In his downtime he plays various card and board games or spends time with his lovely boyfriend. On nice sunny afternoons you will find him and his friends along East Wind's mile of Lick Creek. Recently, he has become enthralled with birding and taking pictures of our avian friends. By the time this article is published you should be able to see some of his bird pictures, amongst many others, on the eastwind.org website.

Community as Economic Engine

By Laird Schaub

It's endlessly fascinating to see what kaleidoscopic patterns can be generated by shining light on a single facet of intentional communities, and then slowly rotating the focus from one group to the next. As this issue of COMMUNITIES drills down on cooperative economics, I want to look at what emerges when the lens is trained on how communities organize financially.

Intentional communities sort broadly into two kinds: those where members share income (roughly 10-12 percent of the North American field today), and those where they don't (the vast majority).

In the case of the former, the community takes primary responsibility for the economic welfare of its members. In consequence, most such communities roll up their sleeves and develop community-owned businesses, and take advantage of collective purchasing power to leverage economies of scale to make ends meet. In addition to the day-to-day, this kind of community also provides for member vacations, health care, and retirement. It's cradle to grave coverage. Members put everything they earn (though not necessarily everything they *own*) into the pot. In return, the group picks up the tab for all expenses—within whatever boundaries the community sets.

For non-income-sharing communities, however, the collective tends to leave the economics of member households untouched. This is a huge difference.

As someone who lived in an income-sharing community for four decades (1974-2014) and was a delegate to the Federation of Egalitarian Communities for two (1980-2001), I have deep familiarity with how the collective can partner with individual members to address economic imperatives. In addition, as FIC administrator for 28 years and as a group process consultant for three decades I have visited and worked with more than 100 non-income-sharing communities and thus have first-hand knowledge of the economic realities in that milieu as well.

Both because most intentional communities don't share income and because the potential there is less explored, the primary focus of this examination will be the economic relationship between the collective and the individual in non-income-sharing groups. I'm going to first describe what's extant, and then attempt to make the case for shifting it to something else.

The Community Lens

For the community, it's much simpler if its financial focus is narrowly defined: the group will manage the collective assets and liabilities (such as property taxes, infrastructure, and common facilities) and member households will manage themselves. Not only does this protect individual privacy (getting the right balance between group and individual can be tricky) but it's less work. Members may do a fair bit of expense-sharing and collective purchasing, but the group's interest in member finances tends to be limited to whether the checks for HOA dues clear and members don't default on their mortgages.

To be sure, if a member gets into financial trouble, the group may rally around them—either collectively or as neighbors—but it isn't obliged to.

The Individual Household Lens

For the member this hands-off policy cuts two ways. On the one hand it means that information about their financial reality (beyond whether they qualify for a loan if one is needed to buy or build their unit) and their household budget is entirely their business, just as in the mainstream culture.

On the other hand it typically means forgoing one of the principal advantages of shared living: the active assistance from others in figuring things out.

On the expense side, there is considerable room for sharing expenses in non-income-sharing communities, and a good bit of this happens. Perhaps the community has an internal food-buying club or has a link with a nearby CSA (community supported agriculture). Maybe the community owns a single pickup truck or wood splitter that is shared among all members. The group may build a swimming pool, a workshop, or an exercise facility—all of which are likely to be larger and better equipped than what members would build on their own.

But what about the income side? This part of the equation is largely unexplored.

My good friend Terry O'Keefe and I have been trying to bring a lantern into this cavernous, dark room. We think non-income-sharing communities are mostly missing an important opportunity to partner with their members, bringing community assets to bear. Our point is not that communities *must* do this, but that it is a possibility that is largely missed. Often communities are located in places where jobs are poor (which is the obverse of the cheap land coin). If prospective members had help solving their economic challenges it could make a substantial difference in community accessibility.

When Terry and I conducted a workshop bearing the same title as this article to a packed room at the 2015 National Cohousing Conference (in Durham NC), these questions bubbled up in the audience:

1. When does it make more sense for the community to own a business, and when does it make more sense for individual members to own it?

We suggest looking closely at two sub-questions:

a) What structure gives you the best chance of manifesting the management energy needed? Keep in mind that possessing a great commercial concept is not the same as possessing great management skills, and neither

is the same as business savvy (though there is definitely overlap). Thus, people with sound business ideas often need help (whether they know it or not) with:

—Developing a viable business plan
—Securing start-up money
—Finding a qualified manager or management team
—Creating a marketing plan
—Identifying personnel needs (how many and with what skills)

b) To what extent are you open to fellow community members as a potential labor force? This question excites us a lot because of the potential for entrepreneurs (the ones who cook up business ideas) to partner with their non-entrepreneurial neighbors (who are looking to supplement their income but are reluctant to start a business). These two segments coexist in almost all groups and are often at odds with each other, because of the strong tendency for entrepreneurs to be risk tolerant while non-entrepreneurs are risk averse. Here they can make common cause.

2. What advantages might communities businesses have in the marketplace?

—In communities of size there typically exists an amazing pool of skilled, motivated people available on site to help you with most aspects of business development. It's an untapped gold mine.

—Building (or at least enhancing) community can be an explicit by-product of doing the work. Given that your people value the community (and the connections) this significantly boosts job satisfaction and morale (which translates directly to better attention to detail, fewer mistakes, less absenteeism, more pride in the work, less turnover).

—If the business is owned by the community (and members are the workers) there will tend to be enhanced motivation and satisfaction from that fact alone. (There are any number of jobs I would gracefully do for my community that I would never do for wages.)

—Healthy communities tend to have superior skills at communicating and working constructively with conflict. This can make all the difference in terms of job satisfaction and can be readily parlayed into superior customer service.

—Communities tend to be more collaborative (and less hierarchic). To the extent that this obtains, problem-solving becomes an all-skate activity (not just something management tackles). In addition to enhancing morale, it leads to more creative ideas and better problem-solving.

—Community-based businesses can often be more fluid about part-time work, flex hours, day care on the job, costuming, and working at home.

—You'll tend to get more people who will volunteer, because of the values you represent and how it helps the community.

—There will also be an opportunity advantage among customers who value cooperation. Potential customers within your service area who value community will preferentially give you their business. While there will be limits to how much they will be willing to pay a premium for your product or service, they will at least prefer you when price and quality are comparable.

—Your labor pool itself may give you an advantage. For example, my long-time community (Sandhill Farm) produces sorghum syrup. While our neighbors could grow sorghum just as easily as we, they didn't have the labor to do the work and couldn't afford to hire it. Thus there was virtually no local competition for our product and we'd get the business from all who prefer to buy locally (which is a growing market share). Not stopping there we pressed this advantage by inviting friends to join us for the labor-intensive three-week harvest each fall. Our numbers temporarily swell to three times their normal size and it's a madhouse harvest festival (a form of temporary community that we know how to manage). We're no more efficient working this way, but all the incoming labor is volunteered—guest campesinos are compensated with wonderful food and camaraderie.

—To some extent people can substitute for capital and property. If people are a major resource, think about how to leverage that. Let me give another Sandhill example for how we applied this principle. Just like most of our northeast Missouri neighbors, we grew soybeans. If we sold them as a raw product (as our neighbors do) we wouldn't have any advantage. However, we added value to our soybeans by making them into tempeh, and selling that instead. While it wasn't a get rich scheme (we made about $10/hour on tempeh), there were several advantages to this approach:

• We could make tempeh year-'round and work when we wanted (when you're dealing with raw agricultural products you must work when the weather is right, not when it fits your schedule).

• We set the price for local, organic tempeh. When you're selling raw products, you mostly have to sell for what buyers will pay.

• We were selling a product that aligned well with our value for healthy living. Soy-based protein is easier on the land than meat-based protein and there's no cholesterol.

Redefining Terms

—Security

Ordinarily this term conjures up thoughts of bank balances and insurance policies. In community, however, or in close-knit neighborhoods, we can shift that to relationships—the people who will be there for you in time of need.

There are some nuances here, such as maintaining an intergenerational mix (so that the percentage of members needing help doesn't get too high) or joining a community after you can no longer contribute (knocking out of balance a healthy sense of give and take), but these challenges can be solved with sufficient forethought.

—Quality of Life

We mostly think in terms of amassing material goods or money (which can buy material goods). However, if we can shift from ownership of goods to *access* to goods, this is very liberating on one's budget. In community, you learn quickly that everyone doesn't need to own a lawnmower, a washing machine, or a table saw.

Yes, sharing comes with challenges—the tragedy of the commons, and mutuality of need come to mind—yet think of all the dollars you don't have to earn if you share items that you need only occasionally.

This can be translated into working fewer hours, or changing to a job that you enjoy more but that pays less.

—Sustainable Economics

In the mainstream culture we rely on GNP (gross national product) as the principal indicator of economic health. That's a measure of throughput, with no distinction between $1 million spent on building wind turbines or $1 million spent on cleaning up an oil spill (or $1 million in legal fees to defend the company that caused the oil spill)—they are considered equivalent events in terms of GNP.

But what if we valued conservation of resources instead? Rather than measuring how many trees were sold for lumber, we'd focus on how many trees are still standing that *could* be cut into lumber. Since we live in a world of finite resources, maybe it would make better sense to focus on what we have available (rather than how fast we're exchanging it). We could peg our sense of health to how many inches of topsoil we had at the end of the year, rather than on the dollar value of the potatoes we grew in that topsoil last year.

Economist Herman Daly laid out a blueprint for this different approach in his seminal work, *Steady-State Economics* (1977). We could focus on a system of exchanging goods and services that can be continued indefinitely into the future with no one getting hurt. We could emphasize helping people find work they love and are good at.

We could redefine "work" as something that purposefully blurs the traditional distinctions between work and play—because you enjoy both.

To make a shift of this kind requires the fish to sense the water they're swimming in and to decide to try something else. It's questioning fundamental assumptions about what kind of activity or condition best measures the health of an economy—by which I mean a system's capacity to support people getting what they need and want for a decent life.

It's hard, and perhaps a bit scary, but it can be done.

—LS

Challenges Peculiar to Community-Based Businesses

As promotional as I am about community businesses, there are pitfalls that it behooves groups to become familiar with up front:

1. You will need to devote time and resources to training people in communication and cooperative problem-solving. While people will be attracted to what you intend and what you have created, that does not mean they will already possess the skills to plug in well. In fact, they most likely won't (or will have those skills only partially mastered).

Because intentional communities purposefully effect culture change, any business embedded in an intentional community will be operating in a different culture. In recognition of that tautology you would be wise to anticipate the need to build capacity as a precondition to reaping the benefits. (While you might reasonably project a flywheel effect that will help carry you along with its positive momentum once you have things well under way, there will be a lot of effort in the beginning getting things pointed in the right direction.)

2. It is a complication to embrace the concept that relationship-building is part of your work. Yes, it comes with the advantages enumerated in the main article, yet it won't all be cake and balloons. There will be times when you're ready to focus on a task and some of your fellow workers will insist on working through interpersonal tensions instead. In mainstream workplaces, there are typically strict limitations on what, how, and when you can expect tensions to be addressed (if at all); in a community-based business you're going to have to budget time to do this work way beyond the industry average (and it won't come in predictable doses; it'll be episodic, irregular, and occasionally intense).

3. Collaborative decision-making can take considerably longer than typical management styles in the corporate world. While you can make an excellent case for why collaborative styles will produce better decisions in general, there needs to be a fairly sophisticated understanding of how to delegate effectively and under what conditions it makes sense to use a more streamlined decision-making process (for example, to respond effectively to time-sensitive conditions and information). Doing this in a sloppy way is highly expensive (in terms of hurt feelings, a sense among workers of betrayal or hypocrisy, and frustration among management). It's serious work developing an effective decision-making style for collaborative groups, and you can get creamed if you don't anticipate this.

4. It can be tough navigating the dynamic where two members are in a manager/employee role in the community business, while at the same time relating as peers in community meetings. There are different expectations in those roles and it can get confusing if people have trouble changing hats when shifting from business conversations to community conversations.

—LS

Profile of Members Seeking Part-Time Employment

Among members of non-income-sharing communities looking for employment, here are the preferences I have been able to distill from direct observation and discussion:

—Options for part-time work
—Flexible hours
—May need help with childcare, or openness to having young kids at the work site
—Strong match between work values and personal values (no prostitution)
—Low/no commuting
—Casual dress permitted (minimal wardrobe expenses)
—Social skills highly valued
—Limited desire/willingness to manage
—Wages need to be decent, but not exorbitant

—LS

• We could produce the same income from one acre of soybeans converted into tempeh that our neighbors could generate from selling 25 acres of raw soybeans. That allowed us to make the income we needed while farming far less land, which meant our operation needed far less capitalization.

—Often communities develop expertise in an area to meet their own needs, and that knowledge can have commercial application in ways that home-scale experiences may not.

For example, Twin Oaks (Louisa VA) was a well-established community of about 90 adults that grew a significant fraction of its own food in extensive community gardens. When neighboring Acorn (Mineral VA) acquired Southern Exposure Seed Exchange (an heirloom garden seed business) in 1999, it was an easy adjustment for Twin Oaks to become a major seed grower for Acorn, thereby boosting income for both communities.

—Communities frequently control land or have commonly held buildings that are underutilized. (Have you ever noticed how often the lights are out at the common house?)

3. How tricky is it to navigate the dynamic where members are both peer/peer and employer/employee?

The hardest part is likely to occur when the employer gives the employee critical feedback about their performance as an employee—and these two are at the same time neighbors. This can be dicey, and a lot will depend on how well the culture of the community supports the expression of critical feedback and clean communication. If the community struggles to work through tensions among members then this does not bode well. Going the other way, where roles are clear and skills are sharp, it's just another of life's unexpected pleasures.

4. How can we encourage non-income-sharing communities to develop their potential as an economic engine?

We suggest groups think about this in two ways:

a) What can communities do to foster and support business development among entrepreneurial members? [See the replies to Questions 1a and 2 above.] If the collective skills of community members are seen as a pool, it's quite likely that there is expertise within the pool that can cover most of the needs for business expertise—especially at the advising or consulting level (as opposed to the regular job level)—without going outside the group. Canvass the group and put that skill to work! Not only will you be strengthening the economics of the community, you'll be strengthening relationships into the bargain.

Beyond that, the community may be a huge help with capitalization, perhaps through borrowing against capital reserves or by organizing a loan pool funded by members with deep pockets.

b) What can groups do to help new businesses create jobs for non-entrepreneurial members? We touched on this above, and think the community's role in this may be crucial. Often small business owners are content to remain a one-person or single household operation. The owner may not be strong in social skills or is otherwise leery of the dynamics of hiring and firing neighbors. Thus, remaining a ma-and-pa outfit eliminates potential personnel headaches, and owners may not be that ambitious about growing the business.

However, the savvy community will know that a majority of its members are non-entrepreneurial, some fraction of which may well be eager for local work that has a good values match. By getting involved at an early stage, the community can be in a position to offer the carrot of helping to identify business assistance in exchange for job creation—including the offer to troubleshoot personnel concerns, on an as-needed basis. There can be a lot of good in this. The principle is simple: the more people you have eagerly hunting in the clover field, the more you're going to turn up specimens with four leaves.

To be clear, access to the community's "Chamber of Commerce" would be strictly voluntary; no one would be required to use this group, or to heed its advice.

5. To what extent is a focus on business development just buying into the (failed) paradigm that growth solves everything, and to what extent is it sensible to use traditional business tools to support alternative economies?

While I think there's a lot that can be done to dial down demand (and live happily on less), it nonetheless makes sense to be smart about analyzing prospects for new business ideas with time-tested traditional queries. For example:

—What's the market for your product or service?
—What's the competition?
—What do you do better than anyone else?
—What are you passionate about doing?
—Can you profitably produce or deliver your product or service at a price people are willing to pay?
—How is your business an expression of who you want to be in the world?
—How will you manifest the start-up capital you need to make a go of this business?
—How will you service debt and not go belly up?

6. How do you handle the tension between the non-entrepreneur (who tends to be risk averse) and the entrepreneur (who tends to be risk tolerant)?

Let's be real. This tension exists already, whether you have community businesses or not. Isn't it a better strategy to learn to deal constructively with the full breadth of attitudes among your membership than to attempt to eliminate or shy away from opportunities for those differences to manifest?

• • •

Can communities afford to *not* explore their economic potential? I don't think so.

I'm not looking for Trump's jawboning to bring back the manufacturing jobs that were lost to outsourcing. I'm not looking for governments to bail us out at all. I'm looking at what we can do for ourselves, working together in values-aligned cooperative groups—the same kind of entities that impressed Margaret Mead so much for their potential to effect world change. ❧

Laird Schaub used to be the Executive Secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), publisher of this magazine, and was a cofounder of Sandhill Farm, an egalitarian community in Missouri. He now lives with his partner, Susan Anderson, in Duluth, Minnesota, where their community is an old-fashioned neighborhood, complete with book clubs and backyard barbecues. He is also a facilitation trainer and process consultant, and authors a blog that can be read at communityandconsensus.blogspot.com. This article is adapted from his blog entry of February 24, 2017.

Defining Living Wage

How much income is needed to live decently? Answers vary widely, based on individual circumstances. Essentially, we're talking about covering basics (food, shelter, clothing, transportation, and health), plus some for education, travel, entertainment, and savings. Someone living in the city will have a different bottom line than will someone living in a rural county without a stoplight (as I did for 40 years). Someone living in an income-sharing group house will have a very different budget than someone living in a single-family home.

The amount of money you equate with a living wage will be directly tied to the decisions you make about the amount of independence you seek and the degree you feel you need to own things (rather than share them), and these choices will tend to have a significantly greater impact on your money needs than the local real estate market does.

Getting the Life You Want on Less Money

Probably the biggest two items on your expense list where you have immediate potential for drastically reducing your living costs are in housing and transportation, with food a distant third. The more you share, the less money you need to have the standard of living you seek. It's that simple (though, to be sure, the *practice* of sharing is not always simple—which is why there's a social dimension to sustainability).

Another factor is the extent to which you equate your worth with your wage (or your bank account). The mainstream culture has gone to considerable lengths to condition people to make this link, and it can take serious effort to unlearn it. (The good news is that it's possible.)

Making Work Work for You

The way through this issue is to expand the list of things you value when assessing what you get from your work. While money is a factor, you can also value:

—Relationships (both with colleagues and with clients)
—Education (what you learn while delivering the job, either professionally or about yourself)
—Opportunity to serve
—Working conditions (pleasure derived from the environment in which you work)
—Access to resources (use of company tools and expertise for personal purposes)
—Contacts (which may lead to more rewarding jobs in the future)
—Ancillary social benefits (the opportunity to visit friends and relatives living near or en route to where you're delivering work—this is a big one for me, because I travel a lot as a process consultant)

The point is that it's good to have a complex equation when assessing the value you get from work, as it gives you the greatest leverage for practicing the permaculture principle of "stacking functions." That is, your life will tend to work better if you can get work to satisfy multiple functions (rather than just generating the money with which to afford the myriad things you *really* want to do).

The Problems of Separating Love and Money

While mostly people are looking for more money from their work than they're getting now, there can also be a challenge from the other direction: where people insist on not getting paid (or paid decently) for work they love. The idea here is that the other side of the people-not-having-work-they-love coin is people not wanting to mess up what they love by associating money with it.

It works like this. Having taken deeply into their heart the shibboleth that money is the root of all evil they don't want to contaminate activities they love with the taint of commercialism. This can play out in a couple of versions.

One is the artist (and *everyone* who practices something they love can be styled an "artist"—regardless of the value others place on that person's work) who chooses to not sell what they produce (or accept commissions to create it), for fear that market preferences will influence (either subtly or grossly) their artistic choices and they prefer a non-economic purity in their practice.

Another is that some people working in the social change field will prefer to volunteer or accept low wages in exchange for credibility or even power. The dynamic is that there tends to be a deep suspicion about the motives of people who ask for high wages (note that "high" in this context can simply mean a living wage), and some would prefer to demonstrate their depth of conviction by accepting little or no compensation, hoping (perhaps subconsciously) to trade their poverty for influence.

While there are all kinds of flaws in this logic (what does it say about a model of a sustainable world if it depends on the people working to create it not being sustainably compensated for their efforts?), this "pride of poverty" phenomenon is a powerful dynamic undercutting the effectiveness of much social change work today. (For an excellent and poignant story about this, read pages 37-40 of *Passion as Big as a Planet* by Ma'ikwe Ludwig.)

—LS

Laird's Economic Journey

In the interest of completeness and transparency, I want to share my personal odyssey in relationship with money. While everyone's path is unique, and my experience cannot be a blueprint for anyone else, I think personal stories ground the issues and can occasionally provide inspiration.

Background

I grew up in the Republican suburbs of Chicago, and have an extreme amount of privilege in the mainstream culture. My father was financially successful and I was raised to be so myself. There isn't a shadow of a doubt about whether I could make lots of money if I set my sights on that goal.

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

While my father had plenty of money, and seemed to enjoy making it, it was also clear that he wasn't happy. In fact, I came to understand by the time I went to college that he was profoundly lonely. It was a wake-up call of serious proportions to see my father—who was clearly a success as measured by societal standards—not happy. He was, I understand now, living well beyond the "Apex of Fulfillment," and I wanted no part of that experience. So my second piece was that I understood early on the limitations of what money can buy.

I went to college during the years 1967-71: the height of Vietnam protests. It was a period of unprecedented unrest on campus and I was smack in the middle of it. I burst out of my conservative cocoon and started questioning damn near everything. I loved the intensity of the inquiry and what I now see with hindsight were my first tastes of community—dormitory living with peers. These were exciting times, and it was in that context that the next piece emerged: I was drawn to social change work (and I knew that I was going to be a builder-upper rather than a tearer-downer: I had seen both roles showcased in those years of protest, and it was quickly apparent to me that I enjoyed putting together solutions more than I relished ripping the scales from others' eyes).

Coming out of college, I *knew* I was supposed to get a job (in the same way that I knew that I was supposed to go to college after high school). As as I was already oriented toward wanting to make a difference, it seemed a good idea to explore public service, and for two years I worked for the US Department of Transportation in Washington, DC as a junior bureaucrat. As it turned out, it was the only regular 9-5, M-F job I ever had. I worked for the then-magnificent salary of $7,000/year, *and saved money*. (The two main components of this were shared housing and not owning a vehicle; it's incredible how far you can stretch a paycheck when you get control of housing and transportation, and don't eat out every night.)

While it didn't take me long to grok that this would not be my most productive environment (too much bullshit, not enough action), it was a valuable experience. It was, for example, highly instructive to experience being the lowest-paid person in my division (of 12 professionals and seven secretaries), and yet I was the only one not complaining of a shortage of disposable income. People in that office spent to the limit of their income (or beyond). Sure, they had nicer houses and nicer clothes, yet they didn't seem happier. This reinforced my inclination to not enter the consumer rat race. What was the point?

I also realized that I had lost that excitement and stimulation of college days. Maybe I'd made a mistake. Instead of focusing first on career possibilities and rebuilding a network of relationships in whatever job came along, maybe I should have done it the other way around: focus first on the *people* and let the *job* follow. In February 1973 I was in a public library and happened across the current issue of *Psychology Today*. It included an excerpt from a new book by Kat Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment*. It described the first five years of Twin Oaks Community, and it changed my life. "Community" was the label I was searching for to describe what was precious to me about my college experience. So now I had another important piece: people first; money second.

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

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

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

The Community Years

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

—Drastically reduced my need for money to supply basic needs, by living in a homesteading community that shared income.

—Worked consciously to expand the pool of things that give me high satisfaction (essentially this entailed cultivating curiosity).

—Insisted that the highest possible fraction of what I do was things I loved doing.

—Defined work broadly (valuing both domestic and income-producing activities as "work").

—Blurred the line between work and play.

—Worked only when I wanted to (though I wanted to a lot).

—Brought my full passion into everything I did.

—Defined success as loving the process, not the number of projects completed.

To the extent I've succeeded at this, I don't track how much I work, and work doesn't tire me. (Clients feel this from me—even if they don't know where it comes from—and it positively affects their experience with me, making it all the more likely they'll want to work with me again. It's a tremendous positive feedback loop.)

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

Pricing Myself

I do a lot of things that make money. Yet money doesn't drive me. Having a low need for cash (by American standards) gives me considerable leverage in the marketplace. As a process consultant (my most remunerative activity), I know that my services are valuable (I price myself as worth $1500/day, plus expenses). Whenever prospective clients ask what I charge, I give them that figure, and in the same breath tell them that I don't want money to get in the way of the work and that I'll agree to do the job (assuming I'm interested in it) for what they can afford. That is, I tell them that I'll say "yes" to whatever amount of money they put on the table, without quibbling. The only requirement is that they have a conversation (without me present) about what they can afford. What I *don't* do is offer discounts up front. I insist they have the conversation about what the work is worth. And then I trust their answer.

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

One last piece. I've derived considerable satisfaction from making jobs up (rather than out-competing those already in the field). That is, on multiple occasions I've cooked up an idea for a job that hasn't existed previously—something that *really* excited me. I've talked people into supporting me as a volunteer long enough to demonstrate that job's worth, and then gotten the job funded. After a while, my interests invariably evolve, I find someone to replace me, and I create a new job. I've done this half a dozen times.

After firmly establishing myself in the field of intentional communities as a process consultant, I am poised to leave that to others and focus instead on bringing the lessons and tools of cooperative dynamics into the wider culture—among neighborhood associations, schools, churches, and the workplace, where the commitment to community and cooperation is softer, yet the numbers yearning for something better are exponentially higher.

—LS

Photos courtesy of Lindsay Hagamen

Economy, Community, and Place

By Lindsay Hagamen

To last, love must enflesh itself in the materiality of the world—produce food, shelter, warmth or shade, surround itself with careful acts and well-made things.
—Wendell Berry

As a student of nature, I have learned to study the roots, and the linguistic roots of the word "economy" are telling. Far from the anonymity and isolation characteristic of the modern global marketplace, the etymology of "economy" tells the story of the human relationship with community and place. It hints at a place-based identity so powerful that how we cared for our land, our families, and our own bodies were one and the same.

Tracing back the meaning of "economy" leads us to two Greek words: *oikos* and *nomos*. The prefix *eco* stems from the word *oikos*, meaning home or household in ancient Greek. Interpreted narrowly, *oikos* can refer to a house or dwelling. Interpreted more broadly, *oikos* refers to the land—the entire Earth—that is simultaneously our only sustenance and our only home. Hidden in the often academic and disembodied language of "*eco*system," "*eco*logy," and "*eco*nomics" is a memory of a relationship with our environment that is so personal, so profound, and so integral to our sense of identity and purpose that we know this web of relationships as home: the land is our home, and it is who we are.

Memories of a time when the cycles of Life were deeply ingrained in human culture are embedded in the rich etymological history of *nomos* as well. The earliest accounts of *nomos* refer to a field or pasture. While a field may seem rather insignificant to the modern reader, in a culture where food, clothing, medicines, building materials, fuel, and transportation were all derived directly from fields, pastures, and the hedges that defined them, these intricately connected networks of animals and plants literally embodied one's lifeblood.

Over time, the meaning of *nomos* evolved from the pasture itself to describing the people who tended to the pastures and the customs that provided for its well-being. This linguistic evolution reinforces land not as an isolated entity, but rather as a relationship between the land-tender, their stewardship practices, and the land itself: who we are and how we act are as much a part of the land as the geology or climate. So central was the pasture to ancient Greek society that *nomos* was more broadly used to simultaneously denote steward/manager and custom/rules/laws.

With great irony, we can come to understand the root meaning of

"economy" as *stewarding our home*—whether that home is our body, our household, or the Earth itself. Our economy is tending to the intricate web of relationships, processes, and practices that provide for our lifeblood and allow for the flourishing of the natural cycles that support all Life so abundantly. When we embody this deeply interdependent way of living, when we internalize the fate of the land as the fate of our bodies, then "economy" can simply be understood as the rules we live by— the *house rules.*

• • •

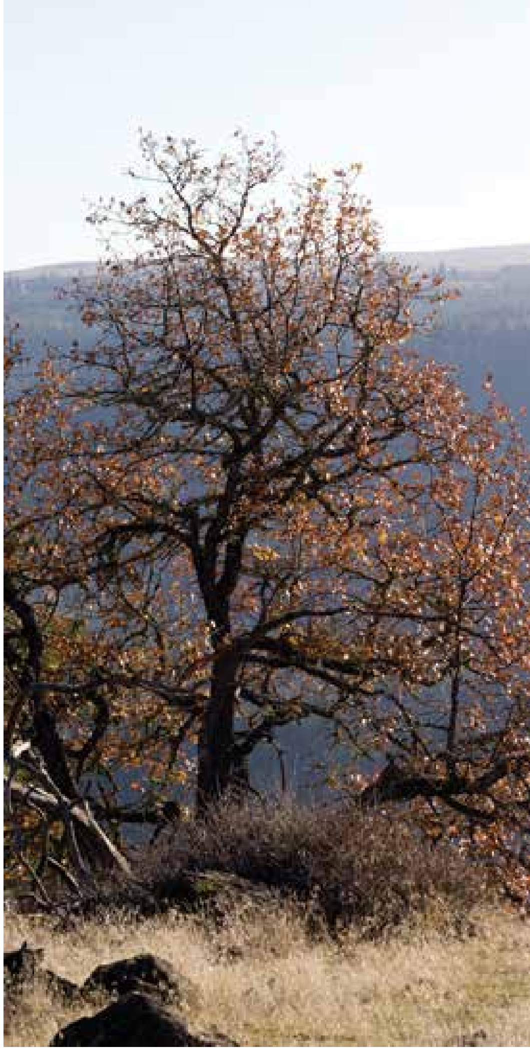
There is a profound power inherent in the relationships with people and place that allow us to provide for our own basic needs and those of our beloveds. As flocks of liberal arts college students and back-to-the-landers alike will attest, provisioning food, water, energy, shelter—the natural economy of stewarding our home—is innately satisfying work. In *The Prophet*, poet philosopher Kahlil Gibran offers a hint as to why: "You work that you may keep pace with the earth and the soul of the earth. For to be idle is to become a stranger unto the seasons, and to step out of life's procession, that marches in majesty and proud submission towards the infinite."

Freedom and security are born from engaging in the natural economy of stewarding body, home, and land.

We work so as to keep pace with the soul of the Earth? Gibran's poetic words are reminiscent of the wonder inherent in food tasting good and sex being pleasurable. They speak to a deep knowing in the cells of our bodies that when we are in an intimate relationship with the very places, processes, and people that physically sustain us, we are engaging in the very same patterns that have helped us survive since time immemorial. The intrinsic pleasure, beauty, and fulfillment in these relationships is unparalleled: biting into the juicy flesh of homegrown fruit, placing another log, split by hand, on the fire, caring for a newborn lamb. Biophilia, our inherent love for Life, helps us understand why: our intimate participation in Life's processes is a biological imperative masked as love. As Gibran continues, *"To love life through labour is to be intimate with life's inmost secret."*

Invoking this visceral knowledge of land-tenders around the world, Wendell Berry wrote, "if you are dependent on people who do not know you, who control the value of your necessities, you are not free, and you are not safe." For freedom and security are born not from monetary savings nor political ideology, but rather from engaging in the natural economy of stewarding body, home, and land.

When we intimately participate in meeting our most basic needs—energy, food, water, shel-



ter, clothing—through a relationship with the land and with local networks of others doing the same, we not only come to know the innermost workings of the Earth, we also create abundance and choice. With this comes the true freedom of self-determination. When we love life through provisioning the food we eat, the warmth of our home, the energy that lights up our night, and the clothing on our backs, then freedom and fulfillment are no longer something we seek. They become something we embody.

For freedom, like food, water, or shelter, is a biological imperative. And fulfillment is our hard-won—and hard wired—evolutionary reward for satisfying this imperative. Authority over our own bodies, time, and energy is not a political right, granted or revoked, by the powers of government (or corporations, for that matter). Nor is it a lofty ideal schemed up by lovers of wisdom. Personal choice and freedom of action (and consequences) is inherent to Life's capacity to march in proud submission towards the infinite.

The sovereignty intrinsic to the human condition is what Thomas Jefferson, drawing on a long line of philosophers before him, referenced when he declared "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" as our *inalienable* rights, endowed, not by government, but by Nature. Our sovereignty is woven into the very fabric of our being alive. Not only does personal freedom grow out of our participation in the natural economy of stewarding our earthly home, it is our very sovereignty that enables us to steward our home to begin with.

If it is thriving that we truly seek, then reclaiming this natural heritage, and with it our true economy, is a good place to start. For when we align with what the soft animal of our body understands on a visceral level as surviving, evolution has hard wired us to find it full of pleasure, immense joy, and deep satisfaction. Freedom, belonging, and abundance are both foundational to the nature of our being alive and our reward for aligning ourselves with Nature. ❧

This is an excerpt from a longer essay, "Re-Membering the Web of Life: The Biological Imperative for Sovereignty, Interdependence, and a Consent Economy," which can be found online at ic.org/re-membering-the-web-of-life.

Lindsay Hagamen is a lover of Life and a Steward of the Windward Community, located on the southern slopes of Mount Adams in Washington State. She is co-author of Ecosexuality: When Nature Inspires the Arts of Love *and co-creator of the annual EcoSex Convergence and TerraSoma retreats. Lindsay spends her days immersing her hands in rich garden soil, listening intently, and giving belly rubs to her pigs. See www.windward.org.*

A New Economy: Connections of Affection

By Helen Iles

It's August 2015 and I'm at a workshop at the innovative CERES community hub in Melbourne, Australia. Jonathan Dawson, Head of Economics at the Schumacher College in Devon, UK, has come to talk about a new kind of economic exchange and I, along with 30 or so other enthusiastic change-makers, am here to listen. I last met Jonathan when he was living at Findhorn in Scotland. He was president of the Global Ecovillage Network and I was interviewing him for *Living in the Future*, an online video series about low-impact living.

In his Melbourne workshop, Jonathan told of inspiring projects that were helping to shift the paradigm of economic activity. He told us that the Age of Transition was no longer ahead of us. It was already happening. He spoke about the importance of hubs and networks—deep relationships of like-minded people who are acting according to the principles of Right Livelihood or perhaps, if you prefer, according to the permaculture principles of Earth Care, People Care, and Fair Share.

Jonathan gave us concrete examples of how this works: a cluster of small-scale family-owned businesses in Tuscany, who got together to create a supply chain that challenged corporate monopoly; a San Francisco cafe called Karma Kitchen (karmakitchen.org), where your food is paid for by the last person who sat in your seat, and where you are invited to pay for the next person's meal. Indeed, Melbourne's own volunteer-run Lentil as Anything was mentioned (lentilasanything.com), where customers are asked to donate what they can afford.

Jonathan also talked about LETS systems and time banking, a method of earning and spending credits to exchange local goods and services. He mentioned local currencies and credit unions, designed to keep money within a defined geographical area to boost neighbourhood wealth and resilience.

What these systems have in common is that unlike with many low-impact projects, self-sufficiency is not the goal. The aim is to strengthen local networks of producers and consumers through what he called "connections of affection."

Many studies demonstrate the vulnerability of "just in time" systems of production and consumption. You have only to browse through the items available in any supermarket to realise that many of the staple foods we rely upon come from far away, arriving on our tables through a complex system of harvesting, producing, packaging, and transporting which creates a lot of surplus, not only in energy but in waste, time, and productivity. Legislation and buying patterns have emphasised monetary value over real cost. The impact on the planet from this global, specialised marketplace is not included in the price.

All this was interesting enough to make the workshop more than worthwhile, but the comment that stayed with me most concerned the impact of ecovillages. As someone who has been researching, making films about, and living in low-impact communities for more than 15 years, I was a little dismayed to hear him say that while ecovillages punch above their weight in many aspects, perhaps the best they can do in the economic realm is show us a model. The number of people actually involved in ecovillages is too small to have any real effect on the global economy. Building on his own involve-

ment in ecovillages, Jonathan was suggesting that what we now need is to begin to take their examples and think big.

On reflection, I can only agree. When faced with living in a city the size of Melbourne, it is hard to see how the activities of those four million people—never mind the impact of a city the size of Sao Paulo or Moscow—can be offset by 20 people living off the land. However, if I break those cities down into smaller communities, I can begin to imagine how they might find inspiration in the activities of an ecovillage. It can be quite empowering to envisage how goods and services can be created, offered, shared, and exchanged on a level that is human and sustainable, and in fact Melbourne seems to be starting to do this very well, with a plethora of projects such as community gardens, food swaps, cafe compost collections, upcycled fashion outlets, farmers' markets. It may be all very hipster but it's possible that in between the beards and fair trade, single-origin coffee, they've cracked the secret to making transition attractive!

On the other side of the planet, the Welsh Government is also doing its bit to make sustainability cool with its One Planet Development policy. This progressive piece of planning legislation has paved the way for a new wave of thought—and action—in how we reimagine the relationship between human activity and the planet's ability to provide. The first One Planet project under this scheme was the Lammas ecovillage (lammas.org.uk), established in 2009. At that time, the policy was in its early stages as Pembrokeshire County Council's Policy 52, a supplementary planning guidance for low-impact development in the countryside. It was later rolled out across Wales, demanding that applicants provide 65 percent of their basic needs from the land.

This last factor marks it as different from the UK government's national planning policy, which holds that key principles for sustainable development should be based on:

"—social inclusion, recognising the needs of everyone;

—effective protection and enhancement of the environment;

—prudent use of natural resources; and

—maintaining high and stable levels of economic growth and employment." (PPS7, 2010)

Lammas resident Cassandra Lishman disputes the whole idea of "sustainable development," considering it an oxymoron: "I did my Environmental Science degree in my early 20s and it was the economics module that inspired me then to live my life in this way. When I look at products, I can see the (hidden) 'externalities'—the impacts on people and planet that are not costed in."

The Welsh government's re-interpretation of "economic growth and employment" has given rise to an imaginative collection of land-based businesses, not only from Lammas, but from the 20-plus applications which have been approved since 2009. Products range from honey, eggs, and vegetables to organic skincare, craft beers, and willow creations.

"I like to describe my approach to my life in terms of 'closed-loop' economics," says Cassandra. "I grow the food, process it, buy in as little as possible, eat it, create waste on site via compost loos, which in turn feeds the land. The cycle repeats. I strive to attain as close to a closed loop cycle in as many areas of my life as possible, particularly for basic needs."

For her livelihood, Cassandra runs a land-based business growing willow for baskets and sculpture. She teaches weaving at classes in the local community for people of all ages and finds that her relationship with the land permeates all of her work.

"My relationship with the land produces the willow. The willow I turn into a value-added product. With my students, I'm connecting them to the material, they're holding the willow in their hands, and once they start getting into it they really feel part of something. I'm producing the willow and I'm facilitating people producing beautiful things with it. For me, that's all about One Planet. The life-cycle of that product is whole. It's complete. It's a closed loop."

The latest initiative has been to create a recognisable label for products created from One Planet Projects, with the aim of creating a brand that people can trust. These labelled products are circulated via trade fayres, markets, and through local shops and businesses, creating exactly the sort of "connections of affection" that Jonathan Dawson was speaking about. ❧

Helen Iles is director of the Living in the Future series of documentaries about sustainable living and communities. You can watch 60 short films in this series by visiting livinginthefuture.org. You can also order Helen's three longer films at that site or at www.ic.org/community-bookstore/category/community-bookstore-videos. Helen's home is in Holts Field, a chalet community in Gower, Wales.

Photos courtesy of Helen Iles

Towards a Relationship Economy at Port Townsend EcoVillage

By Viki Sonntag

Not long after my partner David and I joined Port Townsend EcoVillage in 2012, a proposal was tendered to extend participation in our community's consensus decision-making to renters—by no less than the renters themselves. I remember walking home post-meeting to our own rental some distance away (our house at the ecovillage had not yet been built), hashing out the merits of the proposal with David. It was spring and the roar of the frogs in the cool night air was cacophonous, not unlike our meeting discussion. Clearly, the proposal had touched some nerves around who should be part of decision-making.

I am happy to report that even though what came to be known as the Honeybee Democracy Proposal took a good six months to consense with a lot of contentious back-and-forth, the community took to heart the spirit of the proposal—that if we were using consensus with integrity, then no one should be excluded from the process, certainly not because they were renters and we were owners (legal considerations aside). In the four years since, I can't recall participation vis-à-vis ownership status being an issue or causing a divide.

Still, I understand why budgets and proposals about how to invest time, energy, and money can precipitate a great deal of angst. My gut-level reaction to the Honeybee Democracy Proposal was that David and I had just invested all of our hard-earned money, and then some, in the ecovillage and that ceding control over how "our" money was spent to anyone without the same level of investment was risky, however much I agreed in principle with the intent of the proposal. Now I see that if we allow ourselves ample time to process economic decisions, we can hold true to our community's vision of "living in harmony with each other and the earth" in a more immediate and intimate way.

Relationship as Framework

So many of our life choices are shaped by economic forces outside of our control, being in control of what remains can feel like an imperative. Living in community doesn't mean that we naturally give up this need for control, but that we find ways to balance our need for control with the needs of others. How we find this balance is grounded in our worldview.

Most of us, myself included, grew up in a materialistic culture, where over our lifetimes more and more of our existence has been put up for sale and commodified. It can be hard not to think in terms of what I/we can or cannot afford.

Lately, I have been reading Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass*, along with a good many others at the village (we are collectively in love with this book!). In it, Professor Kimmerer, a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, shares the lessons of thankfulness, reciprocity, and responsibility as the foundational principles for sustaining life. This is a completely different worldview from that of the dominant ideology of capitalism, the market economy, and America First which distinctly valorize acts of greed, taking, and hoarding.

Centering her stories on indigenous ways of knowing, Kimmerer invites us to experience the world differently: "Respect one another; Support one another; Bring your gift to the world and receive the gifts of others, and there will be enough for all." This teaching, put to song by a village elder, blessed our winter solstice gathering.

As the ecovillage strives to embody our vision of harmony with each other and the earth, I believe we are necessarily evolving towards what might be called a "relationship economy"—one in which economic practices are guided by relationship first and foremost.[1] For this, we need to let go of our monetary ways of thinking.

Circulating Resources

As with many other communities, Port Townsend EcoVillage's path to legal entity and full occupancy has been winding. Conceived on Christmas Eve in 2003, the village formally incorporated in 2010 as a homeowners' association after unsuccessfully exploring becoming an LLC, community land trust, or a limited-equity housing cooperative. Currently, we are a community of 19 adults and six children.

From its beginning, the village committed to providing economic access for all income levels. However, it is the sale of lots that pays for the development of our commons, besides which people must muster the resources to build their own homes. While it may be less costly than buying into a ready-made development, in practice, many people cannot afford the money, time, or energy it takes to build a house themselves. This seems to be especially the case for young families who usu-

ally have far fewer assets, on average, than those on the cusp of retiring.

In addition, the financial collapse of 2008-2009 also affected the pace of our development. In its wake, the City of Port Townsend shrank through out-migration, while the city's demographics increasingly skewed towards retirees, a.k.a. the "silver tsunami." By the end of 2012, the village knew we needed to take some intentional steps towards realizing our dream of a multi-generational community. Thus began a three-year process to develop a plan, consensed in December 2015, for expanding the village's mix of low-income, affordable housing options.

Key to the success of this plan was finding a way to circulate resources. Fortunately, we already had a model. The 7.5 acre property originally included a large residence which serves as "shared" rental housing. The income from this house covers the village's operating expenses (e.g., taxes, insurance, and maintenance on common assets). So while the initial buy-in may be relatively high, financially the village is self-sustaining. There are no assessments and we share a community garden, orchards, a shop for making things, and other means of self-provisioning.

The 2015 low-cost affordable housing plan calls for building a duplex suitable for families with children and providing rental spaces for three tiny houses. The duplex, due to be completed in April, will be managed by the village but owned by our founders, who took money from the sale of a unit they owned and recirculated it to finance the duplex. After they recover their investment from rents (many years from now), they will gift it to the community. This arrangement enables us to ask a rent, based on costs, that is way under market rates.

Living in community means that we find ways to balance our need for control with the needs of others.

The tiny house part of the plan presents an alternative to renting and owning. People have a chance to build or buy an asset—their tiny house—that they can take with them if they need to go. Many tiny home owners are also mortgage-free. In today's uncertain world, tiny house ownership provides a way to opt out of the mainstream economic system while providing some security and stability. Tiny house mobility also makes it less risky to join the village. If the economy at large were to upend and some had to move, they would not be forced to sell their home at an unfavorable price.

To make this work for the village's finances, we are holding title to one of our 12 lots. The rents

Foundation for low-income housing units.

Photos courtesy of Viki Sonntag

from the three tiny house spaces repay the tiny house infrastructure development of $20,000 and replace the money we would have gained from the lot sale—money that is earmarked for building our common house.

Happily, in return, we expect to double our numbers over the next few years. Within the next three months three families will be joining the village and by the end of the year, we hope to fill the tiny house spots. Further, this new plan probably accelerated our commons development. We are now designing our common house which had been waiting on the sale of the lots and a way to make joining the village affordable for young families.

So what has made all this possible? Circulating resources rests on a web of relationships. Certainly, we would not have been able to consense on the low-cost affordable housing plan without trust—trust that committing time and energy to this project would bring in new energy to the village; trust that existing members of the village, many of whom are low-income themselves, were not being asked too much and that if needed, support would be there for them as well; and trust that we are blessed in all who come to us.

Reciprocity

Being an economist, I struggle to find words that don't shut out meaning for other folks. Resource is one of those economic terms that can cause short-sightedness even among those who use it familiarly. Resource implies something owned, something that can be exchanged and commodified, something that is at your command. The danger of seeing the world in these terms is all too apparent.

Sometimes, though, there are economic terms I wish everyone knew. The distinction between use value and exchange value, for example, is helpful to understanding why a capital-dominated economy fails so spectacularly when it comes to the environment.[2] Exchange values are the prices commodities command in the market, while use values reflect the inherent value of goods and services to sustaining life. As the saying goes, you can't eat money.

However, there is another way to view the tension between use and exchange values that goes beyond economics to respecting the interconnectedness of life. Certainly, a deeper understanding of and thankfulness for the gifts that surround us is central to leading an awakened life.

Circulating resources rests on a web of relationships.

Kimmerer in *Braiding Sweetgrass* continually makes this connection. In one passage, she writes: "People often ask me what one thing I would recommend to restore the relationship between land and people. My answer is almost always, 'Plant a garden.' It's good for the health of the earth and it's good for the health of the people. A garden is a nursery for nurturing connection, the soil for cultivation of practical reverence. And its power goes far beyond the garden gate—once you develop a relationship with a little patch of earth, it becomes a seed itself. Something essential happens in a vegetable garden. It's a place where if you can't say 'I love you' out loud, you can say it in seeds. And the land will reciprocate, in beans."[3]

Reading this invariably stirs the response in me of: "Yes—this is our experience too." The ecovillage tries to grow most of our fresh food. Our land is spectacularly bountiful. Much of community life happens in the garden or in sharing meals that had their beginning in the garden. Very recently, our community's relationship to the land in our stewardship has begun a reflection on reciprocity and responsibility.

In the past, someone from within the village has filled the role of garden coordinator. This year, no one person has been able to assume that responsibility. This prompted a discussion of whether we should hire a garden coordinator (we have a specific person in mind who is amazingly gifted) and how should we pay for services—seemingly simple questions.

In reality, though, a number of questions affecting our relationships to each other and the earth are involved. How does it affect the possibility of your relationship to the land if you pay someone to do the work of caring for the land for you? When does our responsibility to care for the land take precedence over caring for each other? Should we consider villagers first for the garden coordinator position? Should ability to pay govern who participates in the gardening and who benefits?

For me, a root question is how do we—as a community—value those activities necessary to sustaining our village life? Paying for services can lead to commoditizing their value. It disrupts reciprocity by undermining thankfulness. Each of us has gifts and how we use those gifts in service of community and the land we live on is what brings meaning to our life. Kimmerer sums this up in the reflection: "This is our work, to discover what we can give."

As it is time to start preparing the garden beds, for now we have decided that the community will pay the outside garden coordinator from our operating budget rather than individual contributions; that everyone can harvest from the garden regardless of time spent in gardening; and that we will mindfully consider over the next six to eight months how our core values are reflected in our economic arrangements.

Learning and Evolving

One morning as I was reading over our history in preparation for leading a tour of the village, I found a reference to our commitment to the three permaculture principles of "Caring for the earth; caring for each other; and sharing the surplus." Wow, I thought, I would love to have a discussion about how to translate these principles into a practical economics for the village. Clear guidance! Something we all agree to! No more muddling about!

In truth, I think any economy at whatever scale is an ongoing experiment. We tend to look at the economy as a fixed system—understandable given the power of capital in our everyday lives. At the same time, we have the power to choose a different way of doing things, a different way of organizing our economy under different principles.

This is one of the reasons I love community. Parker Palmer, a Quaker spiritual activist, has said that we need safe spaces for truth-telling about the condition of our souls. Community provides just this. It allows us to explore how we can live more fully from relationship—even when those relationships are the economic ones of production and consumption. ❧

Viki Sonntag is a grassroots economist who joined Port Townsend EcoVillage in 2012. She is particularly concerned about overconsumption and socioeconomic inequality as root causes of ecological/economic collapse.

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1. In my experience as an economist, it's tricky to label a particular form of economic organization. Whatever term you choose has been used before within mainstream economics to describe something else. For this reason, I believe it would be incorrect to use the term "gift economy" to describe our practices, although a relationship economy shares some of a gift economy's principles, such as reciprocity and thankfulness.

2. Marx was one of the first to elaborate the distinction between use values and exchange values.

3. Robin Wall Kimmerer. 2013. *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

Prepping beds for peas and potatoes.

HOME OWNERSHIP IS DEAD!

Long Live the Permanent Real Estate Cooperative!

By Janelle Orsi

Imagine that a group of people works hard to fill their neighborhood with urban farms, bike lanes, parks, murals, community services, and education programs. Next, imagine that those same people are forced to move away. Ouch, that bites.

Sadly, this is real: Improving the livability of a previously disinvested neighborhood creates opportunities for speculators, landlords, and developers to increase rents and drive up the cost of property, often causing displacement of the very people who made the neighborhood livable to begin with.

It's paralyzing to realize that the positive changes we make in our communities can do more harm than good. We eventually arrive at the most difficult-to-answer question: What will stop the pattern of displacement of low- to moderate-income communities and communities of color?

I believe that only one solution will make a true and long-term difference, and you rarely hear anyone utter it, because it so radically challenges everything we've been told to do as responsible adults pursuing the "American Dream." So brace yourself...

We have to stop profiting from property. We have to treat homes as homes, not as investment vehicles that we hope to later sell to the highest bidders. If the privilege of property ownership determines who builds wealth, then the wealthy will build wealth more quickly than everyone else, white people will build wealth much faster than black people, and we'll continually deepen inequality and racism in this country.

This reality has settled in to the point where I'm ready to declare: I can never, with a clear conscience, buy a house and feel entitled to the capital gains generated by the housing market. I wouldn't feel proud if my method of building wealth is to participate in the pricing out of lower-income families. But I do not want to remain a renter and be victimized by the same dynamic. So, now what?

Now I believe that the most important thing the Sustainable Economies Law Center (SELC)—and everyone else, for that matter—can work on is creating and spreading a different model of property ownership.

This is where the Permanent Real Estate Cooperative (PREC) comes in. "Permanent Real Estate Cooperative" is the name SELC has given to a model we have been working on for land and housing acquisition, management, and ownership. The PREC model employs similar tools to those used by limited equity housing cooperatives (LEHCs) and community land trusts (CLTs): Residents buy homes and feel much like homeowners, but the equity that they can build in a property is limited to what they put in (purchase price and improvements) plus a strictly limited rate of return, usually tied to inflation rates or a consumer price index. Capping the resale value and putting land into community control helps ensure that it won't be sold back into the speculative marketplace.

In addition, the PREC model brings multiple innovations:

1) It's for everyone: Unlike most affordable housing developments and 501(c)(3) community land trusts (CLTs), which are often limited (by tax exemption or their funding sources) to providing housing to low-income households, the PREC is a cooperative corporation spreading the notion that everyone—high-income and low-income—should stop profiting from property and live in limited equity housing.

2) It's self-help: PRECs are platforms for mutual aid and self-help, not charitable assistance. Charities can create a disempowering divide between the helpers and the helped. The cooperative structure transforms the relationship to create groups of people working together to provide for their own long-term housing needs. That can make it motivating and empowering, and it sets the stage for communities to engage in mutual support in many forms beyond housing.

3) It's self-organizing and scalable: Our vision is to design the governance of PRECs to enable bottom-up organizing by hundreds or thousands of members, rather than top-down management by a board and staff. A household or group of people can self-organize, find financing, and identify a property to shepherd into the cooperative. The cooperative will serve as a container to hold title to land and enforce limited equity. The cooperative board and staff support members in this process, but generally do not drive decisions about what properties to buy and who will live in them. Because all members will be responsible for organizing to acquire properties, we believe that a PREC can grow quickly to involve many people and homes.

There is much more to say about the PREC model, how properties are financed, how governance works, how to ensure permanence of affordability, how we can grow a movement of PRECs, how PREC members build economic security outside of the conventional housing market, and so on. SELC has put a lot of thought and research into it, and we feel satisfied that this is a viable and powerful path forward.

So, while a short article cannot do it justice, a SELC project to pilot PRECs in the Bay Area will hopefully illuminate a way out of the gentrification and displacement trap. Stay tuned as we develop this model, and let us know if you recommend any resources or potential support for our work. Note: We have not received funding to do this particular work, and we are just beginning the process of fundraising while we use unrestricted funds to lay the groundwork. Stay tuned, and let us know if you have suggestions. ❧

Janelle Orsi is Executive Director of the Sustainable Economies Law Center. To contact SELC or find out more, visit www.theselc.org. *This article is adapted with permission from www.theselc.org/homeownership_is_dead under a Creative Commons license, creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/.*

MOBILE HOME PARKS:
A Fast and Inexpensive Path to Cohousing

By William Noel

It's been my experience that people who love communal living still want to maintain a level of independence in their household. My wife Brynn is one of them. Eight years ago, before we were married, I rented a two-bedroom house by the beach with seven friends. We built queen-size bunk beds in the garage and our friend Mac lived in the driveway in an RV. When Brynn moved in with us she lasted six strong months before needing a less populated and more controllable space. We now live in a flat in San Francisco with Mac, and I often think about living again with more people and how I could balance that with Brynn's desire for privacy.

I own and operate a real estate investment business. Because I've spent most of my life happily living in group environments, I can't help but keep one eye open for buildings and land that would provide housing for people who want communal living while maintaining ownership of their space. Two years ago, Brynn and I started working with a type of real estate that could provide a solution to the lack of community housing in this country: mobile home parks.

Key Ingredients

Mobile home and RV parks have similar physical structure to cohousing communities. In each, residents own their own homes, share common ground, and have plenty of opportunities for daily interaction. People live closely together while each maintaining their own space in their own home.

I don't love the formality of the term Intentional Community, but in this case it fits as there is a glaring difference between most mobile home parks and cohousing projects. The lack of intention can be seen when you enter a mobile home park where the land is neglected, the homes are in disrepair, and a welcoming community is nowhere to be seen.

My hope, and a hypothesis that we're testing now in Dayton, Ohio, is that if we give the land attention, fix up the homes, and help create a vision for the community, we can transform a distressed mobile home park into a vibrant mobile home neighborhood that is physically similar to a cohousing community and 10 times more affordable.

Last year a prominent cohousing developer told me that a typical cohousing community takes about seven years to create, from idea conception to moving in. The seven years of struggle, frustration, and ultimate elation creates strong group bonds that help form the foundation of the community.

With parks, the land is already zoned and approved for multiple dwellings, the infrastructure is al-

Tiny home - A charming example of what can be done with an 8' wide RV or small mobile home.

Singlewide southern - Manufacturers can add inexpensive custom touches to your home. This front porch adds $1,000 in cost and adds ten times that in character.

ready in place, and the homes are pre-fabricated. A community formed within a mobile home or RV park could be ready for habitation within a few months. While mobile home parks offer a quicker and more affordable option, the group may miss the bonding that happens during the longer formation process of a cohousing community. Personally, I'd rather bond over a sunset BBQ or planting a garden than a date with the city planner!

Jumping Financial Hurdles

Buying an entire mobile home park may seem impossible to somebody who doesn't have mountains of cash. Here is a secret: it is possible. Mobile home parks are famously difficult to finance through a bank. Sellers know that many buyers don't have enough cash to buy the park without financing, and that many banks refuse to loan on parks. Enter Seller Financing.

Seller financing (also called owner financing or seller carry) is common in the mobile home park industry. It works like this:

• Buyer talks to Seller.

• Seller thinks that Buyer is an honest person with a good business plan.

• Seller accepts a down payment on the park and lets the buyer pay the rest of the purchase price over the next number of years in monthly payments with interest.

People can buy parks from Sellers with as little as 10 percent down, sometimes less. Pick your location, find some smaller or poorly run parks, and call the owners. You'll be surprised how many are willing to sell their park to you and carry the financing. Small parks and poorly run parks often don't make money, and sometimes the owner is paying each month to keep the park afloat. These Sellers are highly motivated. Find them.

Banks will finance parks too, but it is a dreary process. If you can find seller financing, that's the preferred way to go.

Do I Have to Buy the Cow?

There are two types of residents in mobile home parks: lot renters and house renters. Lot renters own their own homes and pay the park owner to keep their home in the park and hook up to utilities. House renters rent mobile homes. Both of these options are less expensive than apartments and offer the benefits of having a yard, no shared walls, and a house you can drive up to. For friends who are craving community, but don't have the time or money to purchase a park, buying or renting mobile homes on adjacent lots would be one of the cheapest and fastest ways I can think of to begin a community.

Those with more money could buy a small park and move in all their friends. That's what the billionaire founder/CEO of Zappos, Tony Hsieh, did in Las Vegas. He was lonely in his penthouse apartment so he purchased an RV park and invited his friends to move in. Here are the two options that I see:

• **Rental:** Find the closest RV or mobile home park to where you and your friends want to live. Each person rents a space. Put out picnic tables, potted trees, and a good vibe. Seed the feelings of community within the park as you live right next to your best friends.

• **Purchase:** Buy a small park. Use the existing homes at the park or bring in the caliber of homes you desire, from $5,000 fixer-uppers to $120,000 triple-wide ranch homes. Alter the landscape how you see fit.

Community Creation

My wife and I currently own and manage mobile home parks in three states. I don't think the way that we're building community in our parks is necessarily the best or most effective. We buy existing parks, host BBQs, fix up vacant homes, and try to create the best neighborhood with the ingredients that we're given. That is a top-down approach, where the change happens from the property owner.

The ground-up transition happens as the old residents move out and new residents move in. We look for people who will be good neighbors, with clean records, good communication skills, and the ability to afford living in the park. Because we aren't starting with a group of like-minded individuals, it usually takes two years for us to turn a neglected park back into a full and vibrant community.

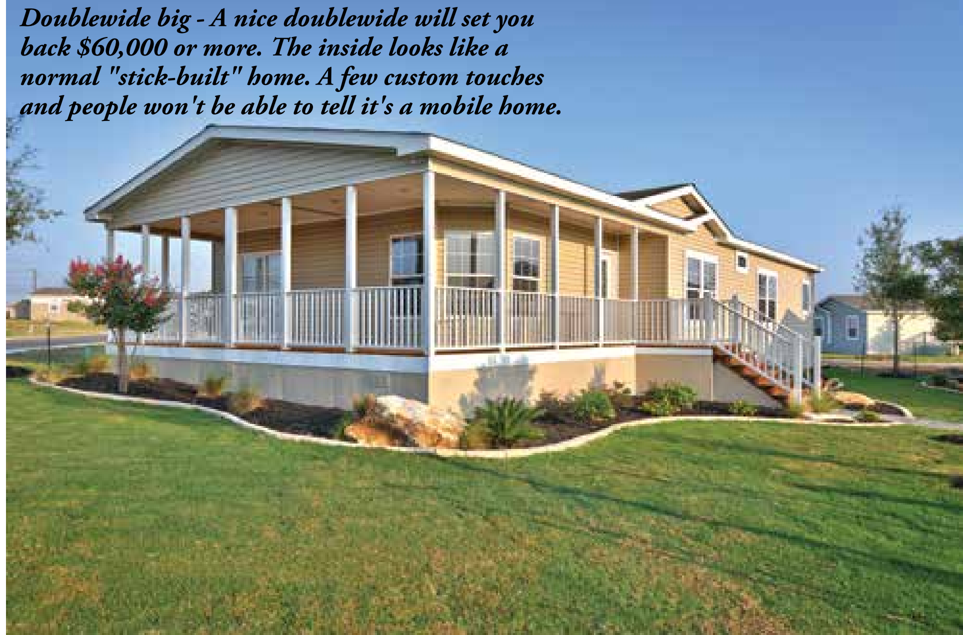
Buying or renting a nearly empty park with an existing group of friends, you could make this transition in months instead of years. Compare that to the seven years is takes to form a group, buy land, and plan, permit, and build new homes and infrastructure in a traditional cohousing community. Not only is the time reduced, the costs are cut dramatically compared to building a community on raw land.

Identifying Your Future Community

There are two types of mobile home park communities:

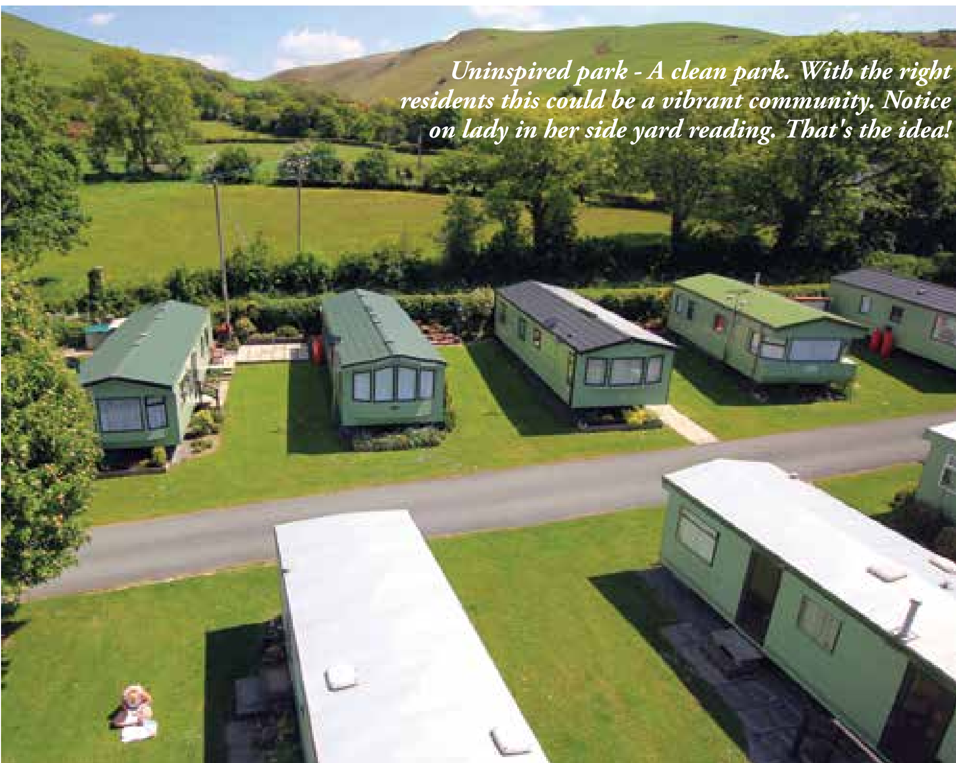
• **Lifestyle Communities:** These parks are clean and expensive and have nice amenities, like pools and clubhouses. Think of the perfect place to retire with your friends where you ride golf carts around have short white picket fences. That is a lifestyle community.

• **Affordable Housing:** Most parks fall into this category. The price to live here is about the same as a Class B or C apartment building. People live in these parks because they don't have to share



Doublewide big - A nice doublewide will set you back $60,000 or more. The inside looks like a normal "stick-built" home. A few custom touches and people won't be able to tell it's a mobile home.

Photos courtesy of William Noel



Uninspired park - A clean park. With the right residents this could be a vibrant community. Notice on lady in her side yard reading. That's the idea!

walls with neighbors, they can drive right up to their house, and they have a yard.

Lifestyle communities don't need your help. The social scene is good and people are happy to live there. If you want to create a strong and positive community where one doesn't already exist, let's assume that you're going to buy an affordable housing park.

To find an affordable RV or mobile home park you can either work with an agent or DIY. For those who have never bought property before, the real estate agent is almost always paid for by the person who sells the property, not the buyer. Even if you're planning on doing all of the hunting yourself it won't hurt to have an agent look for you as well. A good agent will use her network to uncover properties that you might not find on your own.

Ready to start looking? Go to www.mobilehomeparkstore.com and start to get yourself acquainted with the parks in your area. This will give you an idea of the parks that are for sale in your state, near your town, and in the price range you're looking for.

Whether you decide to use an agent or look for yourself, you need to know what you're looking for. Most of these principles apply to houses, apartment buildings, and other forms of real estate. Grab a glass of water, we're about to get into the gritty details.

Utilities

With parks, there is much more land and more infrastructure than single homes or apartment buildings and you should be aware of how everything in your park works. Here is a very brief introduction to park utilities.

• **Water:** If the water is provided by the city it will either be billed directly to the park residents or there will be one large bill to the whole park. If the water is directly billed then each lot will have a separate bill from the city and the city is responsible for maintaining the water lines. If there is just one meter for the whole park, or if you have a well, you are responsible for maintaining your own lines and fixing leaks. Direct billed is preferable from a maintenance standpoint, but it means that your park will be somewhat urban. If you prefer to have a remote park, you will be on a well. Be sure to talk to everybody you can about the well, from the EPA to the park maintenance man. Wells are great and cheap, until they aren't. Know the age and condition of your well and water lines.

• **Sewage:** Everyone's favorite topic! City sewer is preferred. If the water is direct billed and city sewer is included in the bill then you will not be responsible for maintaining the sewer lines either. Whew! Septic tanks are the second best option for sewage, and the best option for rural parks. Almost everyone who lives in the country has septic tanks and many people know how to maintain them. Much less desirable are Lagoons and Wastewater Treatment Plants. Avoid these at all costs, they are one of the only things that can single-handedly destroy your dream if something goes wrong.

• **Trees:** Trees are beautiful and give a park some character. The tree roots are bad for water and sewer lines and septic leach fields. Tree limbs can also break and fall, crushing homes and cars. I love trees; just make sure that you have some time and money set aside for them.

• **Roads:** Pay close attention to the roads in your park because they are expensive to re-pave. Most people do not re-pave the roads in their affordable living parks. They patch potholes, keep the drains cleared, and keep the roads in decent working condition. Other than that, a road is there so that we know where to drive. It doesn't have to be pretty. Most people pave roads only when they refinance their bank loan or list their park for sale.

• **Electricity and Gas:** Try to get these utilities directly billed to each house. If there is one meter for the whole park then you are responsible for the electrical lines and gas lines. You do not want to be responsible for the gas lines. The electric lines are less of a problem, but can still be scary. If you're responsible for their maintenance, make sure you know the age of the lines and condition and budget for their repair and replacement. Keep a friendly relationship with your local electrician too!

If you understand how the utilities work at your mobile home park you will be much better off than I was when I purchased my first park. A major utility problem is one of the few things that can shut down your park. A minor utility problem can still be expensive and usually involves sewage or explosions, or, god forbid, both. Lagoon (large open settling pond for sewage) can become flooded or contaminated, gas lines can leak and be shut down, well water can contain illegal levels of Uranium, electric lines can fray and spark. Know your utilities. The replacement costs, if they aren't in your budget, will be an unwelcome surprise.

(continued on p. 74)

BUSINESS CO-OPS
as a Prelude to Intentional Community

By Werner Kontara

Many intentional communities struggle not only with learning how to get along (group process), but also with financial constraints, which add a lot of stress. While some communities have started one or more businesses, these usually come more as an afterthought rather than being part of the initial overall plan. Wouldn't it be better to develop a successful business as a prelude to the residential community, rather than the other way around?

A pre-established business that already shows its worth can then be evaluated for the financial potential it would provide to the community. Planning the community becomes much more realistic. And a business that is already up and running can support a more vigorous community from the outset.

The indigenous businesses that do exist in intentional communities (ICs) take the numerous forms that exist in society in general, i.e. sole proprietorships, partnerships, LLCs, nonprofits, and worker cooperatives. Some were formerly owned by individual members. Others have been started along the way. Each has its pluses and minuses. The one type that most closely resembles an intentional community is a co-op.

Cooperative businesses have been around for a long time. Indeed, the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), an umbrella association, was established in 1895. According to Wikipedia, there are today more than 100 million people in the world working in co-op businesses. (See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Co-operative_Alliance.)

Mondragon Corporation, located in the Basque area of Spain, is a leading organization that started out in 1956 with five people manufacturing paraffin heaters, and, later, bicycles. Today, the corporation is nearly 75,000 people strong. They have branched out into many kinds of things: electronics, grocery stores, banking, and insurance. (See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mondragon_Corporation.)

While there are a number of kinds of co-ops—housing co-ops, consumer co-ops, retailer co-ops, producer co-ops, worker co-ops, and even to some extent some types of employee stock ownership plans—I am mainly going to be referring to the type exemplified by Mondragon, which some call individualist or worker co-op.

I see a number of parallels between intentional community and co-op business. Both are owned, organized, and managed by the people who participate in them. Both tend toward more consensus-oriented decision making. Both prefer to be more socially interactive. For these reasons I refer to these as Intentional Businesses (IBs).

The methods, and therefore the learning curves, of establishing IBs and ICs are also similar. As is true for forming ICs, business startups need to discuss and develop a realistic business Vision, Mission, and Goals. Follow-on agreements on how to handle the strategic and day-to-day affairs are also needed. A good book on IC development is Diana Leafe Christian's *Creating a Life Together*. Much of what is in there, I see as equally applying to IBs. And Chapter 14 should be an eye-opener for many, in the context of a need for IB within IC, or at least adjunct to it.

While I personally do have interest in ecology and "getting back to the land," I also have aspiring interests in things futuristic. Being that my background has been in technology, industry, and information research, that is where I am "coming from." And I see these areas as potential sources for more sustainable lifestyles as well.

Here I am not just talking about alternative energy, but a whole gamut of possibilities, including what is called "New Space"—commercial development of industry off the Earth. How about joining Elon Musk and his SpaceX corporation in developing an Intentional Colony (IC) on Mars?

One would of course have to start with something more down-to-Earth, like everyday computers and internet stuff. Those other dreams may be in our 100-Year Plan. But between here and there covers a LOT of territory, and therefore opportunity.

My description would include things like manufacturing solar panels, wind turbines, and other related devices, dealing in and/or repairing farming equipment, operating a vehicle repair shop or computer repair shop, manufacturing tools, assembling electronic or mechanical equipment, research and develop-

Member-owners of Pacific Electric, an IB connected to an IC.

Photos courtesy of Werner Kontara

ment, and safety testing. I can envision these examples being compatible with some ICs, as they are considered "light industrial." And even in heavy industrial, there are areas where we could set a better example, at the very least in a fair-trade sense.

In the non-technical sphere, there are opportunities in medical/dental clinics, accounting services, entertainment services including stage shows, eco/wilderness tours, veterinary clinics, credit unions and financial advisers, edible landscaping services, unique and practical furniture, legal services, marketing services, therapy, and life coaching services.

You might want to try a Preliminary Business Plan of your own with both work and home in mind. Here is a basic template. Mine is filled out below it:

Vision

(one paragraph—what would it look like?)

Mission

(one to three paragraphs—what is its intended purpose?)

Goals (can be chronological or by priority)

1) (First accomplishment)
2) (Second accomplishment)
3) (Third accomplishment)

My Possible Business Plan:

Vision

Establish, be part of, and run a technology-based cooperative business that operates in the mechanical, electronic, and computer industries. This business becomes the basis for intentional community that organically grows up around it.

Mission

To supply high quality hardware and software to the high technology industry, in an ecologically, ethically, and financially sustainable manner.

To provide meaningful, satisfying work for communitarians and non-communitarians alike. This satisfaction can come in the forms of intellectual, financial, social, and personal fulfillment.

To set an example to industry of a more ethically progressive way of doing business that is a win-win-win for all of society.

Goals

1) Get a business established, or purchase an existing one, dealing with everyday computer technology—install, maintain, repair, move, migrate, etc.
2) Get into manufacturing of supplier-level wares, both hardware and software.
3) Venture into "New Space."

How IBs Can Grow ICs and More IBs

Initially, people can rent or buy housing in the area. After the business has enough of its own momentum, some could plan and implement Intentional Community housing nearby.

The first company can become an incubator for others. For example, the accounting department could begin doing bookkeeping for other businesses in the area. As it grows, so it then can be spun off as an independent company. Same can be done with the maintenance department, and the landscaping group. And in fact, why not the design group and the manufacturing department too? What about the cafeteria and legal departments, public relations, project managers, janitorial, IT? Janitorial can expand into recycling. Maintenance can get into renovation, construction, or small-scale manufacturing. Legal can also venture into political, social justice, or land use issues. HR can get into career coaching, wellness, life coaching, and human development. The possibilities are limited only by the imagination (and money, of course).

As college has become very expensive recently, set up training programs that include an educational component for apprenticeships and internships. These also apply more real-world scenarios to education, rather than just pure classroom book learning. This approach can be extended to include interaction with Regional Occupational Programs (ROPs) and Regional Occupational Centers (ROCs), as well as local colleges and universities. Eventually, these programs may even become accredited themselves.

Cooperation between the IB and the IC could establish daycare facilities. These could be based on such educational methodologies as Montessori and/or Waldorf. Over time, schooling could be developed to progress up through the grade levels to finally meet with the IB educational programs.

One challenge, however, that I have come across is well described by Laird Schaub in his article on mixing entrepreneurship with intentional community Please see www.ic.org/entrepreneurial-dilemma (featured in Communities #163) for his views on how integrating entrepreneurial energy into cooperative communities often proves difficult as well as necessary.

I hope this stimulates discussion and especially then action toward a more financially sustainable intentional communities movement. To get more involved in the topic of Intentional Business, I invite you to join our IB email list by emailing me at IB@kontara.com. You can also contact me directly there. ❧

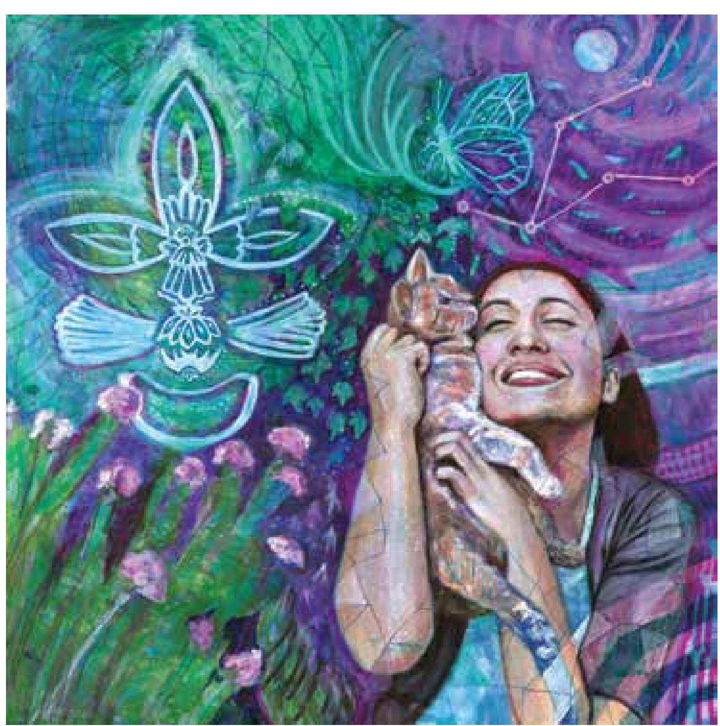
Pacific Electric is associated with LA Eco-Village. LA Coop Lab, a group that helps coops get started, assisted Pacific Electric.

Werner Kontara's work background has been in the technology industry, aerospace, and IT. He has also recently established a home as a residential program with personal recovery in mind. It is called the "Recovery House for the Inner Child," emphasizing self-improvement via attention to Inner Child and Codependency issues. Professional therapy and life coaching are integral parts of the business, which is intended as the seed for establishing an Intentional Community.

COMMUNITY IS THE BEST MEDICINE

A guide to cooperative living on a disability income

By Lily Silver



Your disability income will be the same almost anywhere you go. In community, you may find it can go a lot farther and take you to a lot more interesting places.

There are groovy, interesting, creative communities out there of every imaginable size, shape, and flavor. Many people find that intentional communities are a way to be less isolated, have a higher quality of life, and live in a more meaningful way.

In the quest for your new home, here are a few things to watch for, and a few things to watch out for:

The Quest for Community

Living in community can bring a great deal more friendship, warmth, and purposefulness into your life. The Fellowship for Intentional Community website includes a list of over 1,000 intentional communities: communes, ecovillages, community farms, land trusts, artist communities, cooperative houses, spiritual communities, cohousing, and bunches more.

There is also a Communities Classifieds section with a list of dreamers and seekers looking to start their own communities or find their "people." You can post your own dreams here or read through to see what others have posted.

Many people find that living in community can mean a much higher quality of life on much less income. However, if you're simply looking for cheap housing, intentional communities will not be a good match for you. Most communities are seeking people who are like-minded and genuinely wish to be part of their community life.

Finding Your People

When you contact a new community, you may discover that no one else living there right now is on disability. You may also discover that no one else who has ever lived there since the beginning of time has ever been on disability. Someone has to be the groundbreaker. You can pave the way for others.

Even able-bodied people don't find the perfect match right out of the gate. Be persistent. Contact as many communities as you can. And be patient. Folks may need a little time to get to know you and your situation. With time, you will find somewhere that is a good match.

Most people visit more than one community before finding one they click with. For a person with disabilities, this is easier said than done. If you are able, though, it's nice to be able to explore.

When you arrive at a new community, don't be shocked if it seems very different than what you read on the website. Some people are "aspirational" when writing these descriptions. The person who wrote that website may have had big dreams. They also may be long gone by now.

Work Contributions

Some communities ask for work contributions and others do not. If you are too ill to work, it is still possible to find a community that may be a great match for you.

In some places, the work contribution is small—for example, one day per month. If you cannot build buildings or dig ditches, there are usually some gentler, more sedentary ways in which you can contribute.

If you have physical disabilities, some newly-forming communities may not be the best match. These communities are often looking for people who can construct buildings and cultivate the land. Keep an eye out for more established communities where the buildings are already built.

Don't be scared off if you feel you don't have enough to contribute. If you are a nice person, and you get along well with the people living there, and you have a stable income from your disability check, and you wish to be part of the community life, there are many communities that may be happy to have you.

Financial Contributions

Some communities are quite pricey and others are dirt cheap. In my experience, cohousing communities in particular tend to be on the pricey, middle class side. If you are poor, this may not be a good match. Then again, if you see somewhere you just love, it does not hurt to contact them and ask. Someone in the community may have a room or space available for rent.

Some communities require a buy-in, join fee, or land purchase. For a new or forming community, it may be hard to join if you don't have the financial means.

Please don't be scared off by all join fees. In an older, more established community, you may find the join-in fees to be a bit more flexible. If the community is large and located in an isolated area, there are more than likely a few houses or rooms sitting empty by now. Someone might be quite pleased to rent you one of these places, and you might be quite pleased with the amount of rent they charge.

Some years back, I visited a land trust community. The website mentioned nothing about being able to rent, but when I got there, there were several empty rooms and houses, and plenty of options.

Income-Sharing Communities

In some communities, all finances are separate and each person has their own largely independent life. Other communities are "income-sharing" or "egalitarian" and resources and/or money are shared. Income-sharing is a very different lifestyle than most of us are used to. Some people find they really love it.

I was initially under the mistaken impression that all income-sharing communities would be looking for full-time work contributions to the community. Apparently, not so!

The nice folks from the Fellowship for Intentional Community were kind enough to set me straight: "Some income-sharing communities may have a full-time work week, but others have a more flexible approach. Some may actually be ideal for people with disabilities."

Community and Disability Benefits

If you are on Social Security, Medicaid, or other benefits, there are a few special considerations you may wish to think about before moving to community (or before moving anywhere, really). For that matter, you might want to think about some of these things even if you are just staying still.

It is especially helpful to learn a little more about how your benefits may be affected before joining in a community business, shared income, shared property, shared cars, shared food, or a community that gives you a place to live but does not charge "rent." All of these things are possible, but if you know the disability regulations, it will make your life a whole lot easier.

It is also worth noting that there are different home care and Medicaid programs in different states. (If you are going to move anyway, you might as well move somewhere with good services!) You can read about all this and much more in this Guide to Disability Benefits and Intentional Community: howtogeton.wordpress.com/community.

Caregiving and Caretaking

If you are unable to care for yourself and need assistance, you may find it difficult or impossible to find a community that can accommodate this.

You may wish to look into state homecare programs that can provide you with a caregiver. This can give you more options for communities to join. Most people with disabilities do not know that all 50 states offer caregiving programs to help low-income people with disabilities in their homes. The type of care, ways to qualify, and hours available vary wildly from state to state. See www.howtogeton.wordpress.com for more information on finding homecare in your area.

The way you approach a community may have a big impact on the kind of response you get. It is wonderful if you can let people know who you are and why you are interested in their community. If you feel you will need special assistance, you might see if it is possible to bring a friend or caregiver with you when you visit.

Not all who wander are lost. Keep wandering and keep questing. You may not find your perfect community overnight, but if you keep an open mind and an open heart, there is a new life out there waiting for you. I hope you find your people, and the community of your dreams. ❧

Lily Silver is disabled and primarily homebound with CFS/ME. Luckily, she lives in an informal community of like-minded, kind-hearted friends and familiars who brighten her days. Lily is assembling a free online guide to Disability, Medicaid, and Home Care. Come by and visit at www.howtogeton.wordpress.com.

Artwork by Elizabeth D'Angelo

Elizabeth D'Angelo—artist, spreader of love and hope, illness warrior, and force of nature—often paints with her arms pinned to her sides due to severe weakness and muscle spasms from advanced ME/CFS. In the midst of an illness that keeps her confined to her 12 × 12 ft. bedroom, she makes vibrant work that has captivated a loyal following. Painting is her meditation, her grounding rod, and her calling, but it is the connection with others through her art that inspires her the most. To see more of her artwork, visit www.elizabethdangelo.com.

Exemplars: An Introduction

By Paul Freundlich

The engine of our global economy is mostly about "scaling up"; massing the numbers to a mighty aggregation that promises to deliver fortunes to innovators and investors, and a cornucopia of consumer goods and entertainment to the rest.

In my years of service on various national and international boards, particularly the CERES Coalition, the Stakeholder Council of the Global Reporting Initiative, and the International Labor Rights Fund, while our struggles to moderate the global market economy towards greater sustainability were admirable, it seemed we were missing half the point. At odd moments, usually after hours, but occasionally in meetings, I raised a concern that even if we could put Humpty Dumpty back together again, the result might look more like scrambled eggs.

How to reconcile the advantages of scaling up, which even if they include a sustainability agenda, suffer from the inequities built into capitalism? Is there a fundamental contradiction between scaling up to achieve a sustainable global economic system, and scaling down in support of livable communities? Is there a place to meet, somewhere in the middle, to recognize a global perspective, while respecting the communities where we live and work?

My perspective was influenced by experiences within a community framework that operated substantially outside the parameters and reward systems of the mainstream. It formed from my travels and filmmaking in the early days of the Peace Corps, the cooperative organizing I explored in the US, and my observations of what works and what doesn't. Out of the many inspiring places, people, and projects, I've sought to assemble a tool kit for social entrepreneurs and community organizers that might just be the basis for a viable system.

The Exemplars Library (www.exemplars.world) and a complementary work book, *Exemplars, Tools for a Sustainable Future*, present four domains within which to explore initiatives consistent with the values of sustainability, cooperation, and community.

1. Cities and towns which are models of creativity, civility, and sustainability: When I was in Denmark for meetings with EU officials establishing reporting standards, I was turned on to a museum show, "Green Architecture for the Future." Most impressive to me was a display on the city of Curitiba in Brazil, where the transportation system had been radically reimagined. I haven't made it to Curitiba yet, but I did talk with a member of our Dance New England community who had grown up there, and confirmed all I had read. Burlington, Vermont is a lot closer to home, and I've visited enough to see real progress that united the business community with activists to support the expansion of a downtown location for a thriving food co-op as one example of many. I've been gifted the inside story of how change was motivated and accomplished in Burlington by my friendships with the founder of Seventh Generation and Magic Hat Brewery, Alan Newman, and one of the key administrators for the city, Bruce Seifer. I also hosted then-mayor Bernie Sanders when the Social Investment Forum put together a challenge on Capitol Hill to the financial industry's corruption and the Fed's complicity.

2. Businesses, nonprofits, foundations which support local, sustainable development: For all the mess and exploitation of healthcare in the US, I've had a ringside seat for how well primary medical, dental, and behavioral health can be conceived and delivered. My wife, Margaret, has been Senior VP and Clinical Director of a community health center that in 40 years has gone from a few providers to serving 14 cities and 150,000 patients without losing the value of its connection to their local communities.

3. Activist interventions seeking to modify the macro systems of the market economy: Wayne Silby showed up at a Right Livelihood conference at Another Place Farm in the late '70s, which helped inspire him to innovate a series of socially screened funds, establishing Calvert as a leader in social investment, and became one of the leading products we offered through the Co-op America catalog.

4. Environments which encompass the meeting point of community and productivity: Social dancing is one the cheapest, most economical and wondrous diversions the human spirit has devised. The community boogies which seized me body and soul in the mid-'90s led us to create Dance New England as a working, playing community spanning generations and cultures for the thousands who have participated over the years. Then there is this very magazine, which I had the pleasure of helping edit and publish for a decade, which has been a signpost to a healthy future.

Each Exemplar describes its starting proposition; its strategic intervention; the main tools to accomplish its mission; the outcome of its activity; and excerpts in its own words or drawn from other sources. Each Exemplar is linked to its primary website. In aggregate, perusing the Library offers connections from one Exemplar to many others, and from each Exemplar to our own experience, as well as to the challenges we face.

The Library is initially a product of my research, including suggestions from colleagues and friends. Knowing there are thousands more likely candidates, the invitation is for viewers to follow the format, submit examples which will be evaluated and curated—thus growing the Library as a resource for social entrepreneurs, organizers, and academics.

The criteria I've developed for selection (understanding that nobody's perfect) is as follows:

Open source access to information: For all the commodification and commercialization of the internet, the world wide web, cell phones, and Wikipedia offer the greatest democratization of knowledge and opinion since traveling minstrels, the printing press, and public libraries.

Sharing economy: A sharing economy minimizes consumption and encourages the face-to-face interactions that add up to community. AirBnB and Couch Surfing, Zip cars, public bike exchanges are just the newest iteration of a theme that has been a neglected part of human history since neighbors shared the hunt and midwives delivered babies. The most consistent and comprehensive approach to a sharing economy has been the century and a half development of cooperatives, both consumer and producer, which rewrite ownership to rest on "one member, one vote."

Locality: For all the connection to global, national, and regional systems, the delivery of services and most lives are lived local. A host of traditional community and neighborhood social institutions, including churches and the United Way, support community. Farmers' markets and community gardens join public parks and dozens of other more established amenities to make urban life civilized.

Interdependence with the environment: As the lessons of global warming are taught more dramatically each season, so we adapt to energy efficiency and conservation of resources, as well as strengthening the infrastructure to prevent catastrophes. Rethinking how we manage food and water will call on the best efforts of communities and individuals, leveraged by technologies that accept long-term responsibility.

Best practices: Although competition has been enshrined as the motivator of productivity and commerce, there is considerable evidence that innovation flourishes when there is an environment where entrepreneurs build on each other's designs. "Silicon Valley Redux" could be

another name for the collaborative workplaces that embrace a social mission, and dot urban environments; places like the HUBs where entrepreneurs bring their ideas and jam with peers.

Distributive systems and appropriate scale: In *The Third Industrial Revolution*, Jeremy Rifkin prepares us for a sea change to a distributive economy. The implications of localized production of energy, food, and goods linked to supranational systems renegotiates the meaning of a global economy. Co-generation of energy via renewable sources is already challenging the centralization of coal, oil, natural gas, and nuclear plants supplying a national grid. Local manufacture of goods via 3D transmission may be less than a decade away.

Consensus, collaboration, and networks are alternatives to more bureaucratic structures. In the complex world we live in, centralized organization and hierarchical decision-making have limited capacity for all critical players to buy in. Turf battles and the battle of egos aren't ever going to be 100 percent avoidable where real interests collide, but mutually respectful environments and accountability are useful principles to invoke.

Redefining productivity and impact investing: As a new wave of ventures includes a social and environmental consciousness, the line between for-profit and not-for-profit blurs. A cohort of inventors and investors, both young and old, are questioning the definition of success by backing nonprofit projects and business start-ups that have redeeming social value, and have begun philanthropic initiatives. There is a whole class of "impact investment" funds where short-term profit is only part of the measure.

Contradictions between open and closed societies: De facto, there is a growing wall between the welcoming of change and holding to traditional limits; between tolerance and prejudice. In a world of vast disparities in culture and economic status, accepting those divisions may not be ideal, but is necessary. Alleviating trends which are desperately unfair and lead to massive failure depends on some combination of technological discovery, a new productivity that doesn't require the diminishing of natural resources, a flowering of education at all levels, and sadly enough, catastrophic threats which cannot otherwise be finessed.

A cultural shift towards imagining the future: Recently, it seems every other movie and cable series has a Sci-Fi premise. The weight of the future bears heavy, as the dues for past extravagances predict cascading tragedies more terrifying than the return of Godzilla. The net effect is to question straight-line projections that the present system, lacking significant modifications, is viable.

Exemplars offers a complementary workbook that speaks of systems which allow society to regenerate from the likely dead-end of a consumption-based, inward-directed spiral. The emerging paradigm allows for the potential of an expanding consciousness and a civilization worthy of the name; a global system that might even answer fundamental questions about what matters.

Welcome to a cautiously emerging paradigm of a world worth living in, and a Library of Exemplars which give it credence. ❧

Paul Freundlich was an Editor/Publisher of Communities *(within our collective framework) for a decade (mid '70s-mid '80s). He is the founder and President Emeritus of Green (Co-op) America, launched Dance New England, helped found the CERES Coalition and served on its Board for 23 years, was Chair of the Stakeholder Council of the Global Reporting Initiative. Paul's novel,* Deus ex Machina*, and a collection of short stories,* The Most Amazing Night We Ever Spent*, are available through Amazon, and many of his films and videos, dating from the early documentaries about the Peace Corps, are on YouTube. His most recent project, a portal to discover and explore the world's most potent and promising places and projects in terms of community and sustainability, is accessible through www.exemplars.world.*

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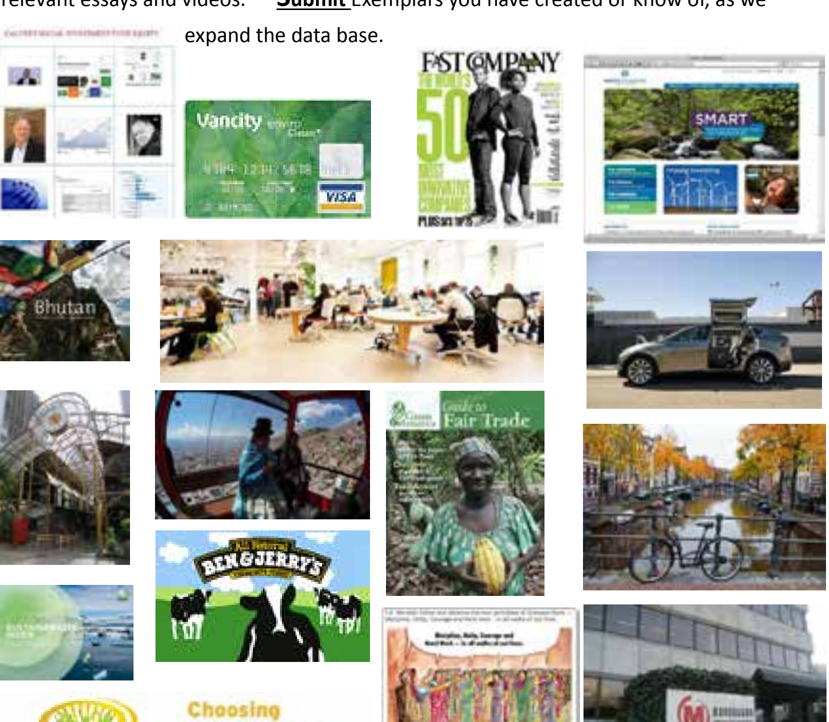

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Living Out a Gift Economy in Community with Others

By Tina Dunn (with input from others in the Jesus Christian community)

Love is the most powerful force we can possibly harness. Unlike food, clothes, and other material things, no one can steal or control the love you personally choose to give. That is one thing that makes love so powerful. Love only requires personal choice at the individual level first, it costs nothing to practice, and the more you give it away, the more you get back.

Our community (the Jesus Christian community in Sydney, Australia) is based on a philosophy of doing everything that we do for Love, the kind of radical love that Jesus taught. This has led us to live out a Gift Economy based on the following motto: "Work For Love Not For Money."

We found that when our motive and purpose is to promote and grow in Love, we live in harmony with God and the rest of Creation. Doing this, we have discovered our needs being met, and the means to keep building a better world have been provided without having to dedicate our time to work we do not believe in or to producing things for the sole purpose of making money.

Here are some practical tips and experiences that have made living out a Gift Economy possible for our community:

Simplicity

For the Gift Economy to work for us, we first had to learn to live on less, instead of focusing on getting more. This has been quite liberating. It starts with a willingness to live on the bare minimum: food and clothing, and it grows into managing all of our resources responsibly.

Living in this way can be fairly humbling and it does have its challenges. When you have money in your hand you tend to think, "I can buy what I want, when I want it." Having little or no money forces you to be more creative, resourceful, and patient. In the consumer societies in which most of us have grown up, we are accustomed to acquiring whatever we want instantly, sometimes going into debt if we don't immediately have the cash to get it. But when we have to wait for things to come, we discover what it is we really need and what we can live without.

One of the discoveries we have made by seeking to live simply has been the abundance of resources already available as discarded "waste" in many developed nations. In fact, most of our food and clothes, and a lot of other needs, have been met through things that we have found thrown out! We have been able to furnish and kit out entire houses and vehicles with a wide variety of items we have found thrown away over the years. Surprisingly, we often experience an overabundance of material goods, including luxury food items discarded by supermarkets. As a bonus, we regularly find enough to share freely with others as well. As a result, we always have enough.

Because we don't want to contribute to the ever-growing pile of unnecessary material goods in the world, we seek first to use what is already freely available. And this has eased much of the pressure that communities normally feel to generate steady incomes to acquire resources. This issue of simplicity has been one of the first key factors in living out a successful Gift Economy model.

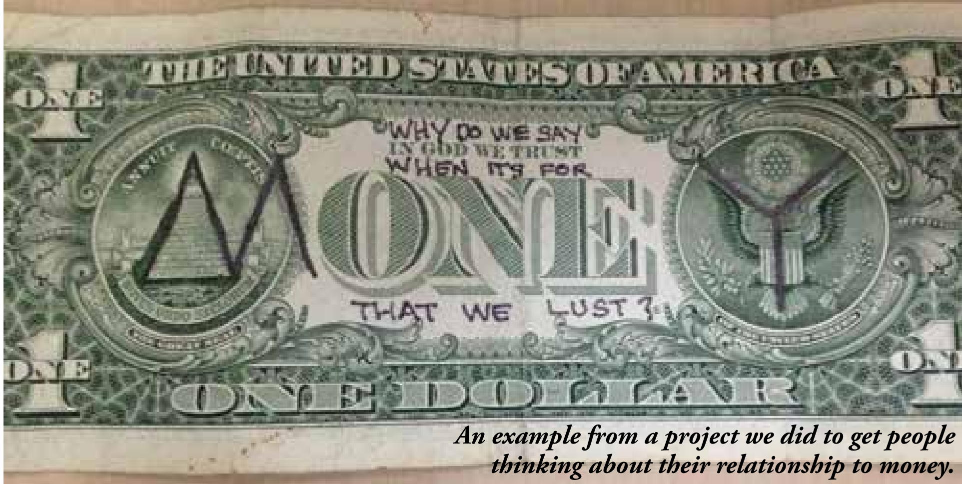
Sharing

Sharing is practically synonymous with community. All communities must share their resources (time, energy, money, possessions, etc.) in some way. In our community we share *all* of our income and resources. No one calls anything their own. This attitude dramatically reduces disagreements related to material things, because we are all in it together. If times are tough, they are tough for all of us, and if things are going well, they go well for everyone. Deep mutual trust is built when we have this level of material equality, and as a result it is rare to have disputes over finances or belongings in our community.

One of the reasons we have been successful with this level of sharing has been making clear our requirements for membership. Like the primitive Christians, when someone joins our community, they quit their secular job (if they had one) and sell all their possessions. The proceeds are distributed to the poor, and if necessary, used for various needs within the community itself.

This initial and individual leap of faith sets the tone for how we manage our resources as a community. It takes faith to put your life in the hands of an unseen force, but we can testify from personal experience that there is nothing

Living simply and sharing what we have with each other.



An example from a project we did to get people thinking about their relationship to money.

to fear, and that God is faithful and true to His promises. Our brothers and sisters who share the journey with us help us along the way, and there is always enough for everyone.

I think most "trouble" comes when people have seen, or start to see, the *community* as their means of support. Communities fail when their members forget that the community should always be seen as a platform for better practicing Love. It's about taking personal responsibility and seeking to help others to do the same. Whatever we do should flow from personal conviction and not just because "the group" says so. Being vigilant about weeding out personal and corporate greed in any decision-making is highly important.

What is needed for a successful community based on a Gift Economy are people who are willing to work in harmony with each other and who seek to use the resources lovingly provided as an expression of love, rather than trying to devise ways to exploit them for personal gain. Once we do that, we find harmony; life stops being a struggle for survival and becomes an expression of genuine liberty and prosperity.

We were created as free beings with personal autonomy; we need to practice that independence of spirit in conjunction with the realization that we have an intrinsic interdependence with the world, with others around us, and with the Creator of it all. Changing our motivation (from "what can I get" to "what can I give") and then finding (or creating!) a community of like-spirited individuals who share our vision is a helpful expression of this.

Sharing, therefore, is another key factor in living out a Gift Economy as a community.

Working for Love

The Gift Economy functions on giving and receiving freely, rather than buying and selling, or demanding and taking. Living out a Gift Economy means continually looking for ways to give. We strive to give from ALL our resources available: money, possessions, energy, and time. "Working for Love, Not Money" is the natural conclusion to this type of giving. We give our energy and time to others without demanding anything back for it.

This new way of "doing business" is not something any of us came up with on our own. We discovered it in the teachings of Jesus. He said that we cannot work for both God and money at the same time, and that it is impossible to serve one without cheating the other. He said that God feeds the birds and clothes the flowers and will do the same for us if we seek to build God's kingdom first. These truths are fundamental to our Gift Economy.

Working for Love is not unique to our community. It is practiced in different ways by other communities, religious and otherwise, and there are even examples of it in society at large. For example, plenty of people in our society are willing to volunteer time and service to causes that they are interested in, whether it be Amnesty International, a political party, a soup kitchen, or walking their elderly neighbor's dog. This desire to give is intrinsic to all of us. I think committed communities like ours differ from others in that we have decided to make Love and sharing the basis on which we live our entire lives. For us, working for love is our full-time job—and we see so much genuine need for Love in the world that we are never going to run out of work to do!

While we believe in doing everything for Love and without expecting anything in return, we are not entirely removed from the economic system (yet!) and we still use money (see section below on "Accepting Gifts"). We see greed ("the love of money") as being the root cause of evil in our world. So our emphasis is on not doing anything *for the purpose* of making money or gaining material wealth. In this way, we seek to combat corruption in ourselves and to, hopefully, give testimony that another way of doing things is possible—here and now.

A lot of people tend to view this kind of lifestyle as being unproductive, and only for those who don't want to work (or who can't work). Society has been led to believe that unless there is a financial/material exchange then the goods or services have no value. Taking even just one example of a demanding job that isn't materially rewarded—raising children—we know that such a teaching is false. There are so many jobs that don't get done—even when people are paid to do them—that we happily do for free simply because we believe they have value in and of themselves.

It is a challenge to personal pride knowing that many people do not value the concept of working for love, yet I know for myself that the sense of purpose I have in my life, and the fact that I am living in accord with my conscience, is more than recompense for what others may think of what I am doing. Obviously, part of getting the job done requires confronting the prejudices of society, loved ones, peers, etc. That can be too tall an order for some people, but it is essential if we are to do the work that needs to be done in making real, lasting improvements to the world around us.

Virtually any genuinely productive and positive work that is normally done for money can be done even better for love. We can create, build, fix, and improve almost anything for love. In fact, when love is our motivation (rather

Communities fail when their members forget that the community should always be seen as a platform for better practicing Love.

Modern-day gleaning.

Sharing of ourselves brings greater satisfaction than a paycheck.

A really simple way to show love to a stranger.

Photos courtesy of Jesus Christians

than money), we can concentrate on the best jobs that have the best chances of producing the best results we want to see in the world.

For our community, a lot of our work is, like this article, looking for ways to show and inspire others with how this Gift Economy works. We produce and distribute literature, music, and videos which do just that. We also get involved in a wide range of different projects aimed at reinforcing the concept of working for love and not money. We experiment with offering free work to people, making a point of not accepting payment for the work that we do. We have spent time in developing countries helping local populations with the issues that were important to them. We have been involved in initiatives started by others such as Buy Nothing Day, promoting freeganism, holding free markets—and everything in between, from campaigning for refugee rights to staging money-burning demonstrations, donating kidneys to strangers, and walking 2000km across the Nullarbor desert in Australia without taking any food or a change of clothes. All of these have helped to emphasise that this Gift Economy works here and now in the real world.

Working for love demonstrates that the traditional economic model is not necessary when our focus is on helping others, and it is fundamental to the Gift Economy.

Accepting Gifts

The Gift Economy is founded on giving, but it inevitably leads to receiving as well. Jesus said, "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." Other religious leaders have called it "sowing and reaping" or simply "giving and receiving."

A practical way of encouraging a Gift Economy is to work on a "no-conditions donation basis." Many people already use this model online, where they offer their music, books, and other digital content in exchange for a donation of any amount or for free, left at the discretion of the person wanting the product or service. We have simply extended this concept into the tangible world by offering our physical goods and services on a donation basis. Because we are working for love, we are willing to give our products, time, and energy for free. If we receive nothing in exchange for what we give we are happy to have given for free, and if we happen to receive a donation, it's a bonus! So, in effect, there is no way that we can actually lose out on the deal!

We accept donations for the books and DVDs that we produce, and because people value the material, we usually receive enough to cover the cost of printing and more. For people who want to purchase our material in bulk, we usually ask them to simply cover the cost of printing or production. This means that our goods and services are very accessible and so it has made it easier for people to share more of our materials with others.

Having said that, we are seeking to move more and more towards developing total independence from cash. We especially value gifts already purchased or that incorporate useful recycled unwanted goods, because these usually represent more time, effort, and care on behalf of the giver.

Accepting gifts is an important ingredient to living out a Gift Economy, but we cannot rely on such gifts. If we do, we can easily be tempted to start worrying about what kind of gifts we receive as a result of our giving, which will hamper our efforts in working purely for love. Ultimately, our faith needs to be in something bigger than ourselves and our strategies for acquiring resources.

Living by Faith

We recognize that a Gift Economy works because, ultimately, that is how God operates. We have freely received from God and so we can freely give. And it is this element of faith that has made the Gift Economy sustainable for us as a community, because we do not always receive as a direct result of our giving. We trust that provision will come when we need it and from ANY source that God chooses to use.

Our community has occasionally experienced what we would regard as "miraculous" provisions. For example, we have had many experiences of having a specific need met about the same time that the need arises, without the giver knowing about the need. We have done numerous experiments of living without money and seen that we have never lacked what we needed.

This invariably gives us renewed faith that God is aware of our situation, and that he won't let us down when HE thinks we really need something. Most of our needs are not met immediately, and sometimes, when we think we need something, there is more to be gained by learning to live without it. But God has also provided for us much more abundantly than we have asked, not just materially but also in rich spiritual experiences that we would not exchange for any amount of money!

We are conscious that not all communities share our Christian convictions. But we encourage all communities that wish to explore a Gift Economy to have faith in Love. Believe that Love is the highest power that exists in the universe, and believe that if our lives are dedicated to serving Love faithfully, then all our needs (material, emotional, and spiritual) will be met.

Moving Forward

We believe that motives play a fundamental role in the kind of society or community that we are presently a part of, and the one that we want to be a part of in the future. If the motives are skewed, the results are going to be skewed. Personal commitment to values that go beyond a materialistic vision of life is essential. We believe that being willing to go without so that others will have enough, sharing what we have with others, trusting that our lives have value, and that God/Love is the means AND the end, are revolutionary ideas that have the power to transform the world in which we live, should we put them into practice.

Many people sense deep down that the way the system is currently structured is not what life is or should be about. Something instinctively tells us all that there must be an alternative. Hearing about the Gift Economy has inspired many to make significant changes in their lives. They don't always choose the same lifestyle as we do, but we have been able to make connections with people who are trying to make sharing and selflessness a bigger priority in their lives, and who are taking steps to disengage from materialism. All of that represents success in our eyes.

As the rest of the world continues at full speed towards a more materialistic and digital model, we continue seeking ways to deepen our understanding and practice of the Gift Economy. Many countries are seeking a "cashless society" where all monetary transactions are digitally recorded and greater restrictions on commerce are put in place. But we are choosing to move towards practicing a "moneyless" model where we don't interact with the monetary system in any way, digital or otherwise. This is, for us, the natural progression to this concept of working for God/Love.

However, we are not the forerunners in this area! A few trailblazers out there have already been living without money for many years! These include Suelo in the US, Mark Boyle in the UK, and Peace Pilgrim, who walked for peace in the US for over 20 years before her death. These are a few examples of a wider movement of people who are moving towards a different economic model than that presented by our current world system.

The great thing about this model is that, in agreement with what Jesus said, this works even with as few as two or three people, so it can get started almost anywhere and any place, and without any infrastructure or set-up costs. Putting love into practice can be done even when you have nothing materially. It just requires faith to believe it and, most importantly, to act on it. ❧

This article was a collaboration by a few brothers and sisters (including Tina Dunn, primary author) in the Jesus Christian community, who have been living the principles of a gift economy for a few decades. They can usually be found distributing books and DVDs on the streets of Australia, rain, hail, or shine, or cooking a fabulous feast of freshly-found food in their mobile home. They can be contacted at fold@idl.net.au.

Economics and Cooperation in Community: THE ULTIMATE CONTEST

By Dan Schultz

In my youth, I was a fiercely competitive athlete who shed blood, sweat, and tears under the banner of winning. It seemed so vitally important. In fact, at the time I might have said that it was everything. How blind youth can be.

After a half century of living, here I am a zealot cheerleader for the other team, Team Cooperation! Sometimes I'm quarterbacking, sometimes I am a janitor or water boy, but my life is full, facilitating a small cooperative community and organic permaculture farm in the Siskiyou Mountains. It's a well-oiled cooperation machine (most of the time), coaching, complementing, coordinating with each other. Today, Caitlin makes all sorts of kefir, cheese, and yogurt yummies from our dairy goat's milk. Next week, Jim and Kat will collect acorns, huckleberries, eggs, and honey from our beehives to make our local, organic, native scones. Airbnb eco-cabin rentals have become a part of the game plan, a substantial part of our village economy, for guests who want to share our experience of off-grid, sustainable life. The rental revenue, as well as our produce revenue from farmers' market, is member-shared. It is a vigorous exercise (and experiment) in cooperation. And it works.

In the wild that surrounds us, I don't see much of the competitive, dog-eat-dog world that a few misguided theoreticians have attributed to Darwin and Darwinism. Ironically, even our dogs are not dog-eat-dog when they go hunting in the forest together, cooperatively. Look to the wild for examples and you'll find them. Observe carefully. Cooperation indeed thrives in the wilderness. I see the ravens coordinate and communicate with one another for bettering chances of making off with the village abundance. And the bees—the hive has a lifetime of lessons to teach about cooperative culture. As for the peoples of Maitreya Mountain Village, nestled amongst all those woodland creatures, I can imagine no instance in which competing against each other would impart any redeemable benefit.

Civilization tells a different story. If I happen upon a sporting event, live or from flickering dots on a screen, it often takes me back to the old ways of what seems to be a past life for me—but also leads to some calculations in my head. I make an accounting of all that goes into that sporting event. My mind boggles to grok the magnitude of creativity, intention, the precious TIME, as well as the dollars and cents. When I extrapolate the sum to include all sports, everywhere; basketball, baseball, cricket, football, soccer—ALL of it—from grade school to the pros; well, it is almost incomprehensible. Can you imagine? What an unbelievable FORCE!

And what good did the playing of games do? Beyond some mild entertainment there are the lessons learned by the rigors of hard work and self-discipline—which could just as easily be gained by farming, hunting, foraging, building, community, or other cooperative work. Games have petty, meaningless goals like going over a line or moving faster or some such drivel. I now think of all my early days spent competing as an utter waste of time. Competing did not make me or anyone else healthier or happier. Lasting, lifelong injuries occur, and death. But maybe the greatest cost is the human separation resulting from perpetually creating an Us and a Them, good guys and bad guys, teammates, rivals, and enemies. My testimony, both from observation and personal experience, is that this "competitive spirit" is a ghost that likes to live in every room. It comes back to haunt you.

Let's go positive—what kinds of constructive things could be done with all that collective, competitive energy? Balance the federal budget of the United States of America? Possibly yes. Create a sustainable paradise the world over? Absolutely.

(continued on p. 75)

Photos courtesy of Dan Schultz

Konohana children in the barley field.

LET ALL MONEY IN THE WORLD BECOME EVERYONE'S MONEY

Towards a Society Where All People Can Share Money

By Yoshifumi Nakano (a.k.a. Nakanon)

Takkun (five-year-old boy): Nakanon, I would like to buy this pack of rice crackers.

Nakanon: You lack some money to buy it. Takkun, you have already used your money to buy other snacks.

Ayana (seven-year-old girl): I can lend my money to you.

Nakanon: Ayana is kind.

Ayana: Yes, we can share the snacks with everyone.

This is a conversation I had with our children on New Year's Day. In Japan, we have a custom called *Otoshidama* where children are given a special allowance by adults. In some cases, the children at the Konohana Family buy products for the Konohana Family with their allowance. The children buy their favorite snacks or cookies, but they share them with other children. By sharing, they can enjoy different snacks with each other. This is such a heartwarming scene. Generally, children can get snacks and necessary things without using money; however, they experience how to use money, and learn to share with others.

The Konohana Family is an agricultural-based community where 84 members (as of January 2017), from babies to seniors, live together with some guests as one big family. In 1994, the Konohana Farm was established with 20 members in order to live a life to support and benefit from each other, and in April 2007 it was renamed the Konohana Family. One of the reasons for the change is that the activities went beyond Farming, but also the change is based on the thought that all the beings in this world are our family.

We have achieved a high level of food self-sufficiency through the Universal Circulation Method with which we grow crops by having dialogues with nature, do not use any agricultural chemicals or chemical fertilizers, and also sell farm products. In addition, we have a wide variety of activities such as operating a farm restaurant and a farm lodge, offering educational programs and a physical and mental care program, and also a handyman business and a paper recycling program.

Within the various business activities, farming and its related activities are mainly operated by the agricultural cooperative union, Kono-

hana Family, and philanthropy businesses are mainly operated by the nonprofit organization, Green Grass. Both organizations are mainly operated by the Konohana Family members; however, fundamentally, neither organization makes an employment contract with the members. Most of the Konohana Family members become union members of the agricultural cooperative union, and the profit of the organization is distributed to those union members, each of whom does a tax return as a sole proprietor. There is no hierarchical relationship or employment relationship. Everyone is free, equal, and an interdependent being.

Living expenses are collected from each individual who has gained money through their employment. Then, all necessary expenses in our daily life such as taxes, pensions, medical expenses, educational expenses, utilities, and daily commodities are paid from this living expense. Total annual living expenditure is 20,000,000 JPY (170,000 USD), and we materialize a rich life with less than 250,000 JPY (2,200 USD)/person/year. Self-sufficiency and this shared living make it possible for us to live richly with less money, and as a result, competition and waste can disappear. We can nurture ourselves to a peaceful mind by living stably without being tied to money and while reducing our environmental impact.

I first visited this community in July 2008. At that time, I worked as an office employee at a public junior high school. Spending time with junior high school students, I witnessed the poverty of the children and the difficulty in covering their educational expenses. I thought I would like to contribute to solving these issues.

I believe children are social treasures who contain the future, and they should be raised equally with public money no matter their parents' financial status. However, the reality of public schools is that private money (from their parents) is used a lot. The rationale behind this situation is that the education is for individuals; hence, beneficiaries should cover the cost. Then elements of competition breed and create disparity, and the children's poverty becomes a social issue.

Nature gives us enough blessings for all human beings to live. However, the ego of human beings generates a mind of greed and unease, which emerge as issues of disparity and conflict. I had a helpless feeling from this reality, since there appeared to be no effective solution. Therefore, finding the Konohana Family was really stunning because there are people who support each other and do not worry about money at all. I felt a future with them, quit my work, and migrated to the Konohana Family on May 20, 2009.

Just after I had moved to the Konohana Family, my role was announced to me: the keeper of the safe! The reason was "my face is square." That was a joke, and the decision was made based on my former experience, but I felt the generosity of the Konohana Family since they entrusted an accounting position to a newcomer.

It has been eight years since then. I have experienced various issues with money.

What I introduced at the beginning of this article concerns the interaction with the children, which involves learning through money. Children enjoy using money which they are given as a New Year's allowance. The background of the children at the Konohana Family varies. Some children have grandparents outside of the community and get a New Year's allowance, and some children do not have such relatives. The children who get a New Year's allowance from outside of the community will have more in their hands. The feeling sometimes comes out in the children's heart that "I'd like to keep the money for myself." However, we keep the money as everyone's money. As I mentioned above, whatever goods we need are covered by our living expenses, and of course, the children's needs are also met. If specific children were allowed to keep money, it would generate a superiority complex and a sense of inequality, and that would lead to disharmony. When I explain this to our children, they are convinced, and they leave their money to me. Their attitudes bring such a pleasant feeling.

This sounds like a trivial matter, but it describes well the temptation that money gives to humans. The current capitalist society is a result of uncontrollable desires and the feeling of anxiety which leads to excessive preparation for emergencies, and the feeling that one would like to be at a more

Unity between People and Nature.

Family photo.

The Blessing Receiving Restaurant.

Portrait of the author.

Photos courtesy of Yoko Oki

predominant position than others. The economy is an expression of each individual's mind.

As described earlier, the economic system of the Konohana Family was not developed through intellect alone; it is rather a result of the spiritual development of the members, and also an expression of an attitude to share everything with others. The important thing is to keep facing one's mind and allow for its maturity.

As for myself, I tend to easily respond to others' requests. That tendency sometimes stimulates others' desires and brings harm to the community. For example, with the previous case, if I accepted the children's request as they wanted, a disharmonious feeling would spread among the children. I have made many mistakes in judgment, but every time, these cases were adjusted by other members. I could recognize my immaturity and grow with the adjustments by other members. It is such a gracious experience.

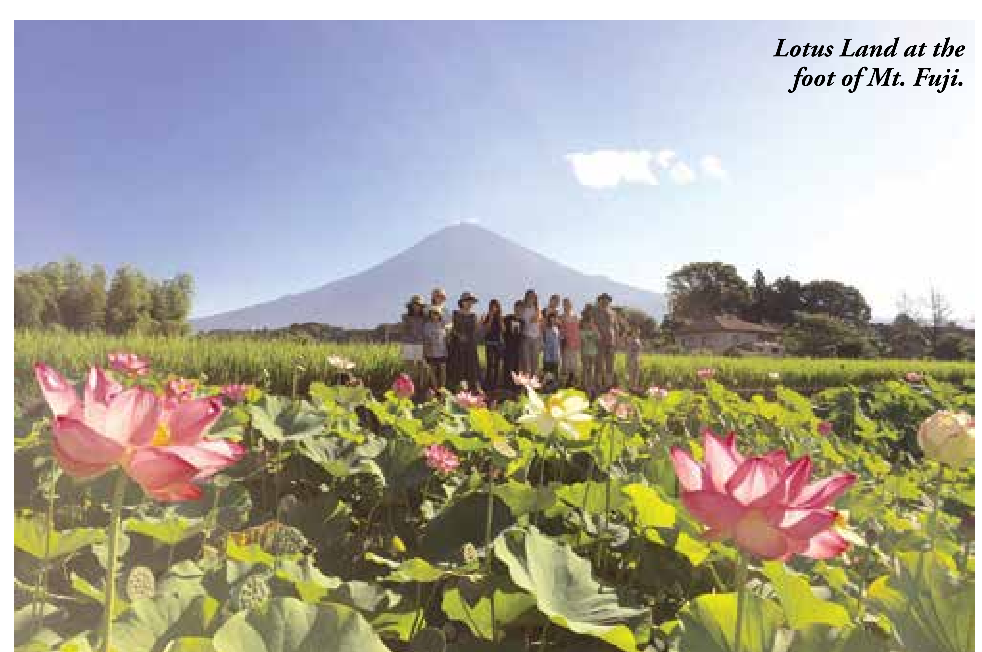
As explained, the Konohana Family has the agricultural cooperative union and the nonprofit organization, and those organizations own properties, and each individual member possesses assets. However, those were entrusted to care from all members, and wherever the money is, it is used for everyone. That leads to a sense of security, but in order for members to have confidence in this, it is necessary to make appropriate judgments about use of the money.

The economy of the Konohana Family is based on self-sufficiency, a sharing lifestyle, and receiving blessings from nature, which is sharing its economy with everyone. The businesses which are born from here will expand the blessings of the universe to the world. Mr. Isami Furuta, called Isadon, a founder of the Konohana Family, expresses it as follows:

In the current society, people work desperately to receive an income. For example at stores, they work strenuously for product development and business activities in order to acquire customers. The increase and decrease in the number of customers becomes a matter of life and death to the stores. However, the activities in the Konohana Family are different. We are given crops which are blessings from the universe, and based on them, we operate our life. Gaining a profit is not a matter of life and death to us. Therefore, our business is different from the general one. We should not think with the same standard as the general one. Our spirit has room to breathe and change. And it is a promise from the universe to utilize our freedom to improve our spirituality. Our business exists as an extension of it. Spreading the blessings to the world—that is our business, and to convey our heart and to circulate happiness is the essence behind it.

The Konohana Family runs a natural foods restaurant, The Blessing Receiving Restaurant, and will soon be opening a café, Lotus Land. But rather than pursuing profit, we value conveying a warm heart and having customers truly experience the joy of gathering.

Economy is generated by *Hataraku* (= work).



Lotus Land at the foot of Mt. Fuji.

The Konohana children.

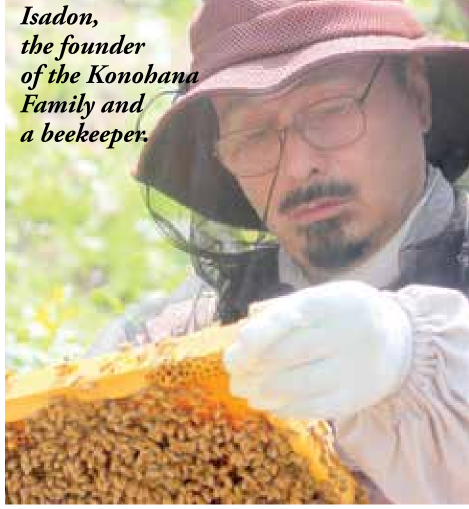
In the Konohana Family, *Hataraku* is described as to *"make others easy."* That is the original meaning of *Hataraku:* "make others (= *Hata*) easy (= *Raku*)," and it is to play one's role in a network by transcending oneself. That also can be seen in the lives of people from nonindustrialized societies, where production activities mean living through religions, art, and ethics.

When people "work" in this manner, money will always be used for others and the whole. That is the economy of the Konohana Family, and I think we act as a future model for society. When all people use money for everyone, wherever the money is, it will be the same. Whoever has money, the money will be for all.

We humans are required to live to support each other since problems, such as environmental destruction and economic disparity, have accumulated through the user's desire for money. When the money of a few becomes the money for all, and everyone begins to use money for the world, money-related troubles and conflicts will disappear. Then, in a society where everyone cooperates with each other and lives abundantly, the current problems of the earth will be naturally solved. For that to occur, the important thing is to improve one's spirituality, to know oneself, and to nurture oneself through practicing economy. This will be the way of generating a spiritually affluent economy.

Yoshifumi Nakano lives in the Konohana Family, a spiritual eco-community at the foot of Mt. Fuji in Japan. He is an accountant and in charge of general affairs. His top priority is learning the divine flow by receiving what he encounters in his daily life, and living with it. By doing so, he really hopes that a world where all beings can maximize their individuality and live in harmony will emerge.

Joyful rice harvesting.


Isadon, the founder of the Konohana Family and a beekeeper.

One Life Network.

MIXING SOCIABILITY AND UTILITY: A Recipe for Community Connection

By Annie Raser-Rowland

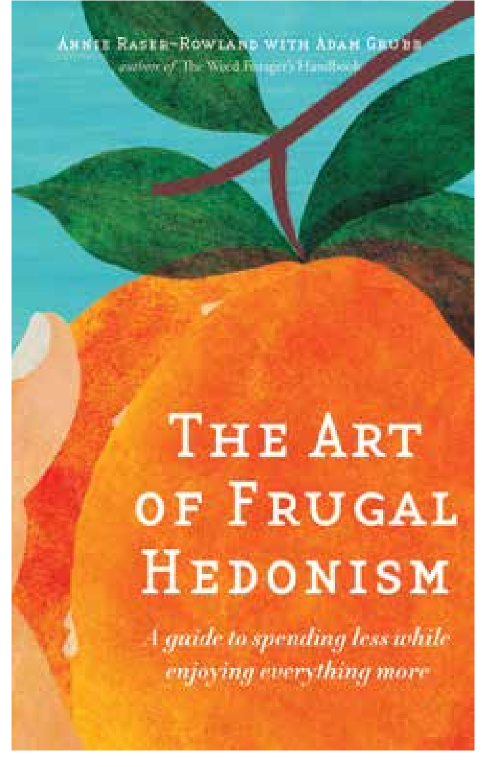
It was a bit of a revelation actually, the point at which I realised that sitting around doing things with your hands while talking to people feels about twice as nice as just sitting around talking to people. Even better, this discovery galloped into my journey of increased self-reliance on the coattails of a minor crisis of morale.

I had excitedly and idealistically surrounded my house with food-bearing vegetation. I had coddled the ruined soil back into superb condition with endless loads of autumn leaves and worm castings. The supporting pioneer and companion species I'd planted had done just what my permacultural training had told me they would do: supported rapid and healthy growth, and now...pounds and pounds of fantastic produce. Waaaay more than my household could eat. I gave some away, swapped as much as I could, and then embarked on trying to preserve the rest. And it took *hours.* Entire days in some cases—to strip a fruit tree, cut out any bird-peck holes, stew and can the whole lot.

The first few sessions in a steamy kitchen, simmering tomatillos into relish, canning quince, stripping branches of basil to make pesto for freezing, drying plums, and slitting olives for brining, were pleasant enough. Put on an audio book and potter away. But by the time I had listened to all of *War and Peace* on CD during that first truly abundant summer, I was beginning to pine for, you know, a bit more of a life.

I began to get quite cynical about the joys of home food production, until a day came where I took my huge tub of fava beans that needed podding with me when I popped over to have tea with a neighbour—I live on a standard street in an inner-suburban neighbourhood, not in an intentional community, but I always befriend my neighbours if I can. After an hour's casual chatting, we'd not only caught up on life events and worked out the details of the mulch delivery we were going to share, but all the fava beans had been podded, and no one had even noticed it happening. (I'd also cured my neighbour of her previous conviction that fava beans are horrible bland mealy things that take too long to prepare! See the sidebar for the recipe that did it.)

What a discovery! Apricot-canning luncheons followed! Gregarious evenings shredding old telephone books for compost while drinking apple cider and singing karaoke became a high-rotation activity! The devil, as they say, may find work for idle hands to do, but from my observations, he is quite happy for it to be of the menial agricultural variety: put a pile of peas on the table to be shelled, and



empty-handed company will reach out for them as eagerly as if they were a bowl of salted peanuts. Is this why people smoke? Need drinks to clutch at parties? A lot of us may be orally fixated, but are we manually fixated too?

Talk seems to flow extra well when the hands are busy. Perhaps the shapes we are making with our fists and fingers help to spawn sympathetic shapes in the brain, sending thoughts off into more novel directions. Perhaps the sense that there is a background activity also narrating the space, removes just the perfect amount of pressure from conversation to allow a more luxuriant rhythm to develop. Perhaps it is the simple fact that for a good chunk of human history, much of our conversational time has occurred while whittling, mending, weaving, husking, and performing all those other manual tasks of DIY human culture than can be brought inside when the weather is bad or once the day has dwindled, and done by fireside or lamplight in a companionable fashion.

People love an activity that provides a social framework. It is one of life's most fundamental pleasures to spend time with other human beings while engaging in a challenge or accomplishing a task. So strong is this call that we invent frameworks and challenges (think of bowling alleys or board games) for our social time when we don't have more practical ones (like barn-raisings or beer brewing) to help it along.

Put a pile of peas on the table to be shelled, and empty-handed company will reach out for them as eagerly as if they were a bowl of salted peanuts.

I now habitually mingle productive time with social time. On the smallest scale, making this happen involves keeping a stash of sewing, seed-sorting, or other simple handwork within easy reach to idly work on while chatting with unexpected visitors. On the bigger scale, it involves everything from passata-making days (of the kind traditional Italian families are famed for), right through to "nerd nights," where a group of friends hang out and investigate a topic they are all interested in. Even if it takes a bit more organising, the alchemy of transforming work into connection-strengthening fun is worth it. And the beauty of it is that the very activities that are dull to do alone make the best social ones—they need so little concentration that they leave enough mental space for talk to burble along easily.

Unlike meeting at a bar, restaurant, or movie to unwind, sociability with a layer of utility doesn't demand that money be spent or goods consumed. Having a function beyond sociability means that quieter or shy people needn't feel like they have little reason to be there. *Group* tasks are pretty easy to turn into social events in an average suburban context. More like a one-off party, they do take some management to run smoothly, but you get there quickly with a little practice: identify who moves fast and efficiently, who attends to details well, who tires easily and should definitely be given the most comfortable chair. Make sure everyone has something to drink and any tools they need, knows what they are doing and where the bathroom is. And of course, make sure that everyone leaves with more than they came with—be that knowledge, a jar of chutney, or an excellent warm feeling towards humanity in the pits of their stomachs.

But if gathering for group tasks is the "party," where can it happen easily and regularly? Where is that everyday place (like the *Cheers* bar from the TV show) where people unwind, and talk is idle and of secondary importance to just being together? In communal living arrangements, spaces are often created for this purpose, though this still requires people to use them—something not automatic if we have become accustomed to not having such a space as part of our days. In other contexts it can be trickier: inviting people around for a "bring your mending pile afternoon," or even a "let's-sit around-and-do-our-most-boring-paperwork-together, then-make-pizzas!" session can be feasible strategies, well worth the effort. ❧

Annie Raser-Rowland lives in Melbourne, Australia, and is co-author of The Art of Frugal Hedonism: A Guide to Spending Less While Enjoying Everything More*, from which this article is a modified extract. See frugalhedonism.com for more.*

Young Fava Bean Smash Recipe

Pick the fava beans when they're only fingernail-sized so they don't need double podding, then lightly steam the podded beans—one minute is all it takes if the water is already at a boil. Then mash them up with olive oil, lemon juice, and salt and pepper to taste. Freshly crushed garlic makes a good addition, and some feta cheese crumbled in there is extra delicious. Spread onto toast, pile it onto slices of cold cooked yam, or use it to top pasta or fill baked potatoes. This mixture freezes well too.

An Invitation to Single Men: Consider Cohousing

By Carolyn Schlam

Before I get into my topic and put forth my arguments, I want you to qualify me for the task. I am a member of a cohousing community in Taos, New Mexico, Valverde Commons, and have been interested in cohousing for a good decade. Though I now practice as a full-time artist and writer, I have worked many years in the real estate field as a broker and professional branding/marketing expert.

Because of my background and experience in selling real estate, Valverde Commons enlisted my aid in selling our community. Our model is a bit out of the ordinary. We are a subdivision, and sell lots; members then build a house to suit their requirements and budget. In the scheme of things, my task in selling VC was a relatively easy one. We have a really beautiful location just outside the historic district of arty Taos. You can walk to the library and our town plaza, and though so centrally located, we are surrounded by open land with horses and cows grazing. Idyllic, truly.

Selling cohousing is the essence of targeted marketing. There's a dedicated database of folks who desire to live in community and they turn to the Intentional Communities website for news and information. IC.org constituted the only advertising I undertook, aside from our website, www.valverdecommons.com. I restructured the latter to point out our community's great assets: the weather and pastoral environment, an art-focused town with many creative people already members of the community, and the opportunity to build a house, daunting to some but an exciting prospect to many.

The calls and emails began almost immediately after I took on my assignment. I had long phone discussions with people from all over the US, and persuaded many of them to plan a visit to our relatively remote town. I worked on the project for a year and a half, during which time I sold all 13 remaining lots, three of which I sold twice, for a total of 16 contracts.

Now to the topic at hand. I have talked with and met with literally hundreds of people, some with a particular interest in our community, and many just exploring the possibility of cohousing somewhere.

I haven't kept count, not thinking at the time that I would write about the job eventually, but in a year and a half, 18 months, I would say that I spoke to an average of eight individuals or couples a month and approximately 140 total. This is a very rough estimate, but feels about right.

Not a huge sampling, but enough, I think, to suggest a trend. Here are the rough stats. Out of

Commoners doing zumba.

Valverde Commons.

the 140 odd couples and singles, I would say about 60 percent were couples and about 40 percent single women. Notice I don't have a category for single men—either single, divorced, or widowed. Why? Because I think there were three in total, one a never-married Texan who liked the town, one a friend of a member who, yes, actually did buy a lot and build a house, and one caller who was rather disenchanted with my pitch.

Of my 16 sales, the breakdown is as follows: nine couples, two of which were same-sex, six single females and one single man. I've not done a comparative study of other cohousing communities, but I would guess the breakdowns are similar. Most of the inquiries I get from people starting communities are from couples or single women. I have never been contacted by a single man interested in initiating a community.

Why? Single women seem particularly disposed to the cohousing model. They love the idea that they can enjoy the privacy of their own homes, and yet have friends just a short walk away. They love the camaraderie, the chance to plan meals and dine together, the classes, meetings, and other get-togethers.

The married women and the married men also enjoy the group activities. We have a full roster of men at our zumba classes, and they are whooping it up with their wives and the single women.

It just doesn't seem to occur to single men to proactively look for and join a cohousing community. Is it, I have wondered, that they don't expect to be single for long? That they are accustomed to women making social arrangements and proposing living arrangements and choices?

It has always seemed to me that single men actually would have the most to gain from joining a community. First and not insignificantly, the plethora of single females to hang with. The availability of ready company, dinners, group activities of all types. Wouldn't this be swell, I ponder.

I would ask if I could, but since only three single men have inquired, I haven't had the chance exactly. But I would like to very much. I would point out all the fun they might have being the center of attention of their single female cohousers, and how much more fulfilling their lives might actually be. Then there's zumba and all the other possibilities of community life they have never previously entertained.

As I am currently working on perhaps a new community in our town (I'm still getting calls and VC is sold out), I am reaching out to single men and asking them to consider our enviable lifestyle. It won't hurt a bit, I promise, and it might open up a new world.

Here's my pitch, men. We want you and we need you. It's a new paradigm. We are not strictly hunters or gatherers anymore. We can do both, and we can do it together. Help make our cohousing communities a haven for all of us, young and old, male and female, gay and straight, and yes, single men and single women. A good life for all, together. Please consider it. ❧

Carolyn Schlam is a painter, sculptor and author. Her book, The Creative Path: Process and Practice*, will be out in 2017 and she regularly writes for many publications on art, real estate, and lifestyle. She is a member of Valverde Commons Cohousing. Her websites include: www.carolynschlam.com, for art; www.realestatewriterpro.com, for writing; and www.valverdecommons.com, for her cohousing community.*

Valverde Commons.

Photos courtesy of Carolyn Schlam

Sunflower Cohousing en France

By Martin Prosser

Our journey into community living started one evening in the Summer of 2009 when we were grouped around a campfire with friends discussing possible future lifestyle alternatives. We (Barbara, Martin, Alan, and Maria) jokingly agreed to buy a residential home between us, so that we could dictate to staff, and not the other way around, as to how we would spend our days in later life. Then we stumbled across "cohousing," which completely changed our thinking, and decided that was the route that we wanted to take—a group of like-minded people sharing and assisting one another in day-to-day events.

We had initially looked at joining a forming or established community in the UK, but were not happy with all of the ideals of those communities that we looked at. In one forming community we were being asked to invest a large sum of money, but the existing group members were unable to tell us who would be responsible for saying how that money would be spent—neither could they give us any ideas of the accommodation that would become ours. At another flagship established community, the organisers admitted that one of the houses had just been sold, and new people were moving in, but nobody in the community had met with those people. Whilst this latter community was held up in the press as being very forward-thinking in respect of the building and site design, there was no evidence of any community spirit.

We believe that there are problems with forming a new community in the UK associated with the high cost of land, and planning controls which essentially revolve around an initial "knee-jerk" reaction of planning. It can literally take years for a group to find a suitable and affordable site, and as a consequence, the make-up of the group, and the ideas as to how the community should evolve, have, in the meantime, changed out of all recognition as members drop out and new members join, the focus of the group keeps changing and becomes aimless. Another option is to go with developers, but this leads to high cost and high-end housing. Another option is to borrow, which none of us wanted to do.

We therefore decided to try to start a community in France, where the cost of land is much cheaper and planning controls are much more relaxed. After we found our site, we received an approval in principle within weeks, and whilst we did later have more protracted negotiations with planners over the external appearance, we knew that the initial approval of the concept could not be overturned. The cost of the site was also such that we could afford to purchase this, and develop the first of the proposed new houses, without resorting to borrowing. Our initial experiences in the UK also led us to purchase the site as an SCI (Société Civile Immobilière)—essentially a nonprofit, limited liability company with shareholders. We have all invested equal amounts into the community, we all have an equal shareholding, and we all have an equal say.

One of the potential problems with cohousing is trying to determine what happens when people, for whatever reason, decide that they want to leave. It is all very well saying that disposal of shares, or a leasehold or freehold interest, has to be approved by the remaining members, but how do you enforce that stipulation, and, perhaps even more importantly, what are the consequences if the remaining members do not approve of the proposed new members? Will financially responsible people looking to join a community commit to joining you if there are potential problems of realising their investment in the future?

We have decided that, in addition to any initial financial investment, community members would also have a rental agreement in respect of the property which they occupy as their own. The rent would need to be a market rent, and one idea which we propose to adopt from our UK research into cohousing is to make an annual dividend payment to an investing member which would be equal to 50 percent of the cost of renting the smallest house on the site—as such, there would be no net additional cost to investing couples unless they chose to live in one of the larger houses which will become available, and where we propose to adjust the rent pro rata to suit the increased floor area.

In the event that people do wish to leave the community, we have proposals for a contingency fund which could be used to buy back the shareholding of an individual member. Whilst we believe this to be a laudable step, this could in itself create financial problems for the rest of the community if more than one member (or couple) wished to leave in the same time frame, and we may need to temper this proposal with the community instead having the first option to buy back shares of members which come up for disposal—to date, we have not found an easy "catch-all" solution.

This, in turn, has highlighted a problem that we had not envisaged. The majority of interest shown in our community to date has been from single people, not couples. Our houses are intended to be occupied by two people, but you cannot force two people to live together, and what happens when a couple split up, and only one of them wishes to leave, or if they both wish to stay, but in separate accommodation? At present, we have no plans for dedicated accommodation for single people who wish to invest in the community—it is something that we will need to address, but it is another thorny problem.

One of the principles of cohousing is that you should downsize, and, owing to the footprint of the existing stone barns within which we are building the new houses, we cannot realistically make the new properties any smaller without possibly constructing apartments—but would people want to live in an apartment on an upper floor which has no direct access to external private space? As our ideas stand at present, a single person living in a two-person dwelling would effectively need to pay rent on one half of the property, but that proposal will need to be revisited when new members join, as they would then also have an equal say as to how the community should evolve.

Our proposals will mean that the original investing members will give up some "control" of the community when new members join—we welcome that situation, but have built in "rules" to protect the community which we hope will be acceptable to incoming investing members as these will also serve to protect future investors.

I am disappointed in the attitude of cohousing.org.uk—they profess to be interested in cohousing in Europe as well as the UK, but, unlike the FIC, they refuse to allow us to register our community on their website. Coupled with the fact that the French, unlike the rest of Europe, also refuse to assimilate the word "cohousing" into their language (we have to refer to ourselves as "habitat groupé" or "habitat participatif"'), this means that it is difficult to advertise our presence to attract new members. The interest that has been shown to date has been solely generated by our presence on the FIC or GEN websites.

We hope to complete the first of our new houses this year (timber framed, terraced-style dwellings, built within the footprint of existing stone barns), and further development of the community site will then need to be put on hold until we can attract new members and additional investment. We do not intend to profit from our physical or monetary investment to date, and are only asking that new members match our financial investment in return for an equal shareholding, and an equal say, in the community project as a whole.

Additional investment will allow us to build a further house for the new members, and will also allow us to commence work on converting another barn into workshops with offices and additional visitor bedroom accommodation over—we also have plans to convert a further barn into a community building, thus freeing up the original house on the site for alternative uses (possibly ambulant disabled accommodation). On the positive side, we will now have more time to spend on developing our potager (vegetable garden), where our ecological approach to the growing of vegetables requires increased hours on weeding and tending plants, although we are also introducing permaculture principles. We will also be implementing wastewater recycling, solar electric, and solar hot water systems as part of our ecological approach to the community.

Following two working-party weeks (thanks to all involved) we now have two high quality composting toilet cabins, and we also compost kitchen waste by way of worm bins. The new houses will also be fitted with "Aquatrons" (a Swedish design which uses a conventional flushing WC, but which then separates solids from liquids, allowing the solids to be composted, and the liquids to be recycled). We have also developed an aquaponics system (a permaculture arrangement whereby fish poo is used to feed vegetables) which we intend to put into full production in the coming year in order to provide us with fresh fish at the dinner table.

One of our working-party volunteers is a horticultural student, and for her final year dissertation she is developing proposals for landscaping of the communal courtyard around which our buildings are constructed, and again, we hope to start work on this aspect of the community project over the coming year.

We have tried to keep our French neighbours abreast of our proposals, and we have had an "Open Day" (to be repeated this year), when a French architect, Mathilde Berthe, who has previously worked with the American architectural practice of McCamant & Durrett, gave a talk on the future of cohousing in France. Our neighbours remain firmly entrenched, but we hope to attract interest from French (and other European nations) as well as the UK—over the years I have come firmly to the conclusion that you can give your child no better start in life than encouraging them to become bilingual, and we also have plans for larger houses for family accommodation.

Over time we have given a lot of thought to our proposals, and to date, the only real setback that we have had is with the French Notary whom we had employed to oversee the purchase of the site, and who completely failed to understand what it was that we were trying to achieve—we had to completely rewrite the articles of our SCI.

We are now looking forward to the next stage in the community development, in particular to receiving further expressions of interest from potential investing members, when we will have the first of our new houses to demonstrate. We will also need to give serious thought as to how we might want to approach accommodation for single persons and/or for members who might wish to rent as opposed to investing in the SCI.

Vive la France! ❧

Martin Prosser is a founder member of the forming intentional community Sunflower Cohousing in France (www.sunflowercohousing.org.uk, www.facebook.com/groups/505483079482490). He is a retired consulting structural engineer who has always been interested in developing practical solutions which are "out of the box." He has extensive DIY skills, and is largely responsible for the design and construction of new timber framed houses being built within the footprint of existing stone barns at Sunflower Cohousing.

Photos courtesy of Martin Prosser

How to Create New Nature Reserves

By Dr. Adrian Cooper

Felixstowe's Community Nature Reserve encourages gardeners and allotment owners to allocate at least three square yards of their land for wildlife-friendly plants, ponds, and insect lodges. As a consequence, we are developing a "community nature reserve" composed of many pieces of private land, but between which insects, birds, and other wildlife can fly and develop sustainable biodiversity. In three to five years' time we hope to have 1,666 people involved, each having allocated their three square yards. The result will be a community nature reserve of 5,000 square yards, i.e. the size of a soccer field. This article tells you our story so far.

Getting started

The original idea behind Felixstowe's Community Nature Reserve was born out of my frustration with politicians during the 2015 UK General Election debate. None of them even mentioned the catastrophic decline in bee and other wildlife populations. Clearly, action from local grassroots was needed.

After the election result was announced, I started talking and listening with people from local government, as well as everyday people from the Felixstowe community. In fact, I spent the months until October 2015 listening and learning about what might be possible, and gathering a small team of volunteers.

Most people understood that wildlife populations in Felixstowe were falling, and they wanted to help, but they simply did not know how.

It also became clear that getting hold of a single plot of land for any kind of nature reserve project in the Felixstowe area would take too long, and would be too complicated.

I therefore decided to make participation in this initiative as simple as possible. First, I redefined what a nature reserve could be. Instead of it being one area of land, I suggested to local people that each of them only had to allocate three square yards of their gardens and/or allotments for wildlife-friendly plants, ponds, and insect lodges, and then aim for 1,666 people to take part. That combination would give us a total area of 5,000 square yards—the area of a soccer field, an image which everyone could imagine.

Creating our new nature reserve

By the end of October 2015, I was certain that enough local people understood what I was trying to do. I therefore started a Facebook page with my partner Dawn Holden to advise local people about wildlife-friendly plants. It can be found at www.facebook.com/FelixstoweCommunityNatureReserve.

Three times each week, a new plant was advised to our rapidly growing readership. That plant list comprised: rowan, barberry, firethorn, foxgloves, thyme, sunflowers, lavender, honeysuckle, ice plant, buddleia, evening primrose, and purple loosestrife. In other words, something for everyone!

For local people who don't have access to the internet, I wrote an article for one of our local advertiser magazines. I also did an interview for our local community TV station, as well as BBC Radio Suffolk. One of the volunteers took it upon herself to print off information posters about our work and aims. Those posters ended up on just about every community notice board in Felixstowe! Over the months leading up to Christmas 2015, it was difficult to miss the name of Felixstowe's Community Nature Reserve! By this time, we received messages from 92 local people, saying they had bought and planted at least one of the plants which we had recommended. We were thrilled with that early take-up of our ideas!

Our work continued by highlighting plants which have berries and other seasonal fruit. Here the plant list was composed of hawthorn, yew, alder buckthorn, elder, berberis, holly, rowan, spindle, dogwood, and wild privet.

Where are we now?

At the time of writing (March 8, 2017), we've had 714 messages from local people, telling us that they have bought and planted at least one of the plants we have recommended. But the good news hasn't stopped there.

In the Leicestershire villages of Cosby and Burbage, local people decided to copy our model to develop their own community nature reserves—all thanks to the internet, and Facebook in particular! So now, there is the Cosby Community Nature Reserve, and the Burbage Community Nature Reserve. We've also had several enquiries from people all over the UK,

Photos courtesy of Dr. Adrian Cooper

asking about the details of how we set ourselves up, and how the initiative has developed. That's why I wanted to write this feature—to inspire and help other communities to take responsibility for their local conservation in a way where everyone can get involved.

Even window box owners are encouraged to take part! After all, they can grow herbs, crocus, snow drops, and much else. So, no one is excluded.

The BBC presenter Chris Packham found out about us, again through the internet. Chris's tweets to his 145,000 Twitter followers produced a small avalanche of enquiries about our work and achievements.

We've also started to work alongside Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Community Project's Officer to help them with their grassroots conservation initiatives, but also to raise our profile. In April 2017, we helped Suffolk Wildlife Trust in Felixstowe with the presentation of a swift walk—to raise awareness of falling populations of swifts, and what everyday people can do to help. In September, we will help the Trust to raise awareness of hedgehog populations in the Felixstowe area.

We often recruit more volunteers. With them come new ideas which we like to introduce. One such innovation has been a Plant Swap Scheme, to keep the cost of buying and growing wildlife friendly plants as low as possible. We have also recently met a local poet who hopes to organise a summer poetry competition on themes related to the work of Felixstowe's Community Nature Reserve. The benefit to that poet (Tim Gardiner) is that we raise the profile of his work, while he contributes his beautiful poetry to our Facebook page. Overall, awareness is raised about wildlife-friendly gardening.

Moving forward, some lessons

The most important lesson which we can offer other groups who may wish to start their own community nature reserve is to listen to as many local people as possible. Be patient. Don't rush into the Facebook phase until your local community feels comfortable with what you plan to do.

The next lesson is to keep listening, so fresh new ideas from the community can be fed into Facebook and other social media as often as possible. We like to use Streetlife.com because it's a great way to get discussions going among local people who otherwise might not get involved in community engagement.

Finally, we recommend that you use as many different types of local media as possible to spread the message about what you're trying to achieve. To give you some idea about our media work, we have so far used Facebook, Streetlife.com, LinkedIn (including multiple LinkedIn posts), three local magazines, our community radio and TV station, BBC Radio Suffolk, and Twitter. ❧

Dr Adrian Cooper worked as an Associate Research Fellow in the Department of Geography, London University between 1992 and 2013. His principal research interest is the public engagement with conservation spaces. He is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, and a Consultant to the BBC TV.

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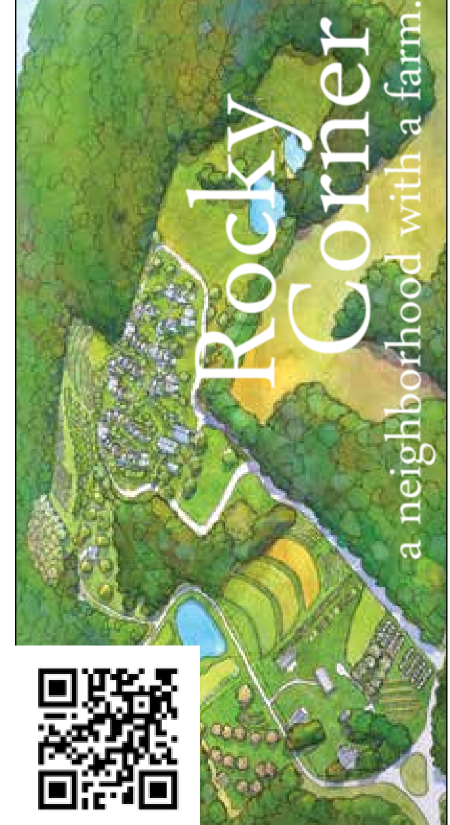

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EVOLVING INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY, PAONIA, COLORADO. 3,300 square foot mountain-view home on 4 1/2 acres. Our valley is a uniquely inspiring mecca of organic agriculture and community consciousness. We are seeking a small group of spiritually, emotionally and ecologically conscious folks as renters to join us in collectively "being the change...". katjagrace@yahoo.com or 707-829-2324.

ROCKY CORNER COHOUSING, THE FIRST IN CONNECTICUT! Here is what makes us unique: We are the first cohousing in southern New England, the closest to NYC. We are 5 miles from the small vibrant city of New Haven where theater and fine arts are thriving. We have been using sociocracy as our governance and decision-making model since 2012.We use permaculture principles to decide how to use our land. Neighbors can garden and farm together as much or as little as they want. We will own our individual energy-efficient homes and co-own pristine farmland and a beautiful common house. Here are some of our values: We strive to create a neighborhood that is supportive and inspiring for individuals and families. We support people of all ages to enter, stay and participate in the community throughout their lives. We value our children as members of the community encouraging their participation and leadership. We work cooperatively for mutual benefit. The community is pedestrian centered and promotes the physical and emotional health, safety and security of our members and guests. We make space in our lives for play and artistic expression. We encourage continual learning, skill sharing and teaching. We consider the Rocky Corner community, the wider human community and the health of the Earth when making decisions and choices. Does this speak to you? We have Affordable and market-rate homes for sale that will be ready to occupy in 2018. Construction is starting. Come join us now! Find out more at www.rockycorner.org

GROWING ITHACA, NY RURAL ECOVILLAGE! WHITE HAWK ECOVILLAGE OFFERS 120 ACRES near the vibrant college town of Ithaca. We're a warm group of folks from all over with a passion for community (Monthly potlucks! Impromptu group fires! Gaggles of kids!) and self-resiliency (Hazelnuts! Blueberries! Maple tree tapping! Chickens, rabbits, ducks, bees!). We have trails with gorgeous views, ponds and a zipline. We're also balancing kids, jobs, hobbies and quiet time. We're stay-at-home parents and telecommuters, co-op employees, engineers and musicians (pro and not!). We include raw foodists and others who hunt and raise our own meat. Ultimately, we're practical and non-judgmental, with a strong commitment to stay affordable. We're about 1/3 full, which means we're over the big hump of getting the community started, and we have plenty of room for YOU! We'd love to talk and explore whether we're a good match. Please visit: www.whitehawkecovillage.org.

ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE - AND WE ARE BUILDING IT. Bread and Roses Collective is looking for new members to join our project of creating sustainable urban living for activists and change-makers. We have two Victorian houses, 10 adults, one toddler, and a half-acre organic permaculture garden in the progressive Westcott Neighborhood of Syracuse, NY. We are within a mile of three universities and a hotbed of local activism. The houses are collectively run as a consensus-based non-profit. We require a commitment of at least a year, share our vegetarian food, and are committed to affordable housing.www.BreadAndRosesCollective.org 315-422-4924info@breadandrosescollective.org

SPIRITSONG COMMUNITY -- We are a small community of five people wanting to be ten people looking for new members. We are located in Napa county, CA. We live on 37 acres of mainly wooded land 2 miles up a dirt road.

We have several structures available for people to live in. We are off the grid of the Internet, we have organic gardens, and a small dairy herd. We have a non-dogmatic interest in Spiritual Awareness. Contact Rory Skuce 707-965-3994 or middletownmassage@yahoo.com

COWEETA HERITAGE CENTER AND TALKING ROCK FARM are located in the mountains of Western North Carolina in a beautiful and diverse temperate rainforest. Coweeta is looking for others who would like to join together to form an Intentional Community embracing the principles of Voluntary Simplicity. Simply put, we wish "to live simply so that others may simply live." It is a recognition that nature provides us with valuable services and resources that we can use to enrich our lives. Utilizing local resources, appropriate technology, and working cooperatively, we can discover creative ways to meet our needs as "directly and simply as possible.". Come join Coweeta and learn how to live lightly on the land and enjoy the Earth's bounty! Contact Coweeta for more info or to schedule a visit!! Contact Paul at coweeta@gmail.com.

DANCING WATERS PERMACULTURE CO-OPERATIVE - We are a 34 year-old community of 13 seeking that combination of people who will bring us to active collaboration and mutual respect so all can participate meaningfully, as we move forward with stewardship of our land and resources. 130 amply wooded acres in the rolling hills and valleys of the Driftless area of southwest Wisconsin, a rural area rich with lush watersheds, small towns, practitioners and institutions of sustainability and resilience, and a burgeoning restorative culture. Homes are commonly owned. Collaborative work is a focus, balanced with supporting member's own projects and careers. Decisions are by consensus; meetings twice monthly, potlucks and work parties. Activities: gardening and putting up food, firewood gathering, building maintenance, orchard, haying, hogs, chickens, eating together, singing, game times. For more info please read our listing at ic.org under "Community Directory" before contacting us. Contact: Rikardo: rif@countryspeed.com, or 608-872-2407

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

UNIQUE AND BEAUTIFUL, MULTI-LAYERED BARN/GREENHOUSE/LIVING SPACE with pond, organic garden and new orchard on 3 acres of spectacular mountainside within a Ringing Cedars inspired settlement. Passive solar structure is for sale, rent or lease to own. Land is commonly owned by Vedrica Forest Gardens LLC and available for you to develop as your own special space. Purchasing party must be approved by resident community and abide by their membership and governing process. $35,000 Check it out at: www.vedrica.org.

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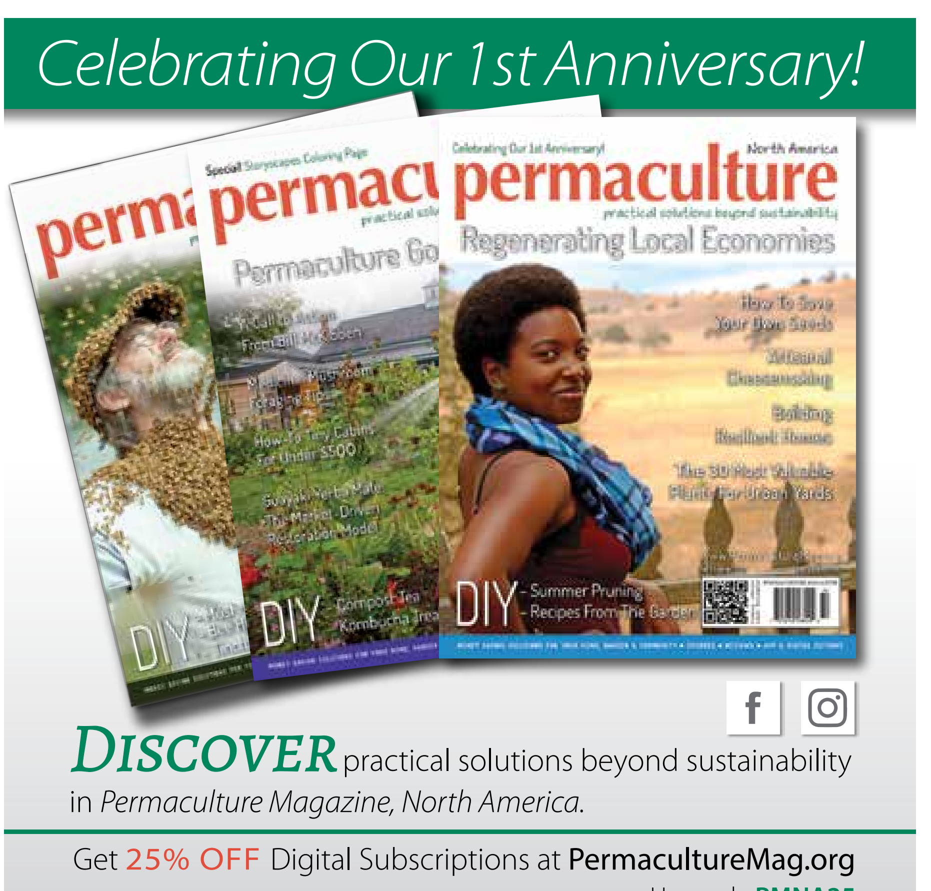

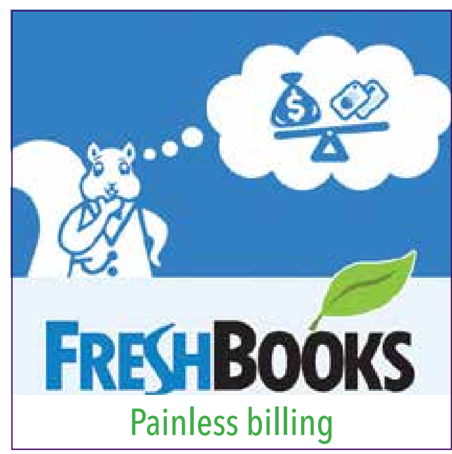

Labor Day Weekend

September 1 - 4

Twin Oaks Community
Louisa, VA

Join us in the beautiful woods of Central Virginia to learn about and experience community and cooperative lifestyles. Hosted by one of the country's oldest and most successful intentional communities, the conference provides workshops, networking opportunities, and lots of fun. The conference is designed both for members of communities, as well as people new to the ideas. Fee includes food and camping or indoor accommodations (prices vary).

www.communitiesconference.org
conference@twinoaks.org * 540 894 5126

Work exchange and discounts available

Go to Dakota's page: www.vedrica.org/MemberPages/Dakota.html. Contact: kelliehere@aol.com

SANTA ROSA CREEK COMMONS, Santa Rosa, California. We are an intergenerational, limited equity, housing cooperative 60 miles north of San Francisco. Although centrally located near public transportation, we are in a secluded wooded area beside a creek on two acres of land. We share ownership of the entire property and pay monthly charges that cover the usual expenses of home ownership. We have kept our costs reasonable by sharing all of the responsibilities of our cooperative and much of its labor. All members serve on the Board of Directors and two committees oversee the welfare of the community. We enjoy a rich social life and a mutual concern for the natural environment. Contact: Membership 707-595-4399.

HEARTWOOD COHOUSING ~ Durango / Bayfield, Colorado. Where the high red-rock deserts of the Four Corners climb into the stunning San Juan Mountains. 24 homes ~ 350 acres of woodland, pastures, and community gardens. Established in 2000. ~ Happily rolling into our 18th year. Heartwoodcohousing.com FB/HeartwoodCohousing

FAIR OAKS ECOHOUSING, EAST OF SACRAMENTO, CA - A family-friendly green cohousing community – construction starts Spring 2017. Thirty townhomes on 3.7 acres with a large clubhouse, pool, gardens, and orchard. Fair Oaks is 18 miles east of downtown Sacramento, with easy access to the American River Parkway, Fair Oaks Village, shopping, and K-12 schools. Learn more at www.FairOaksEcoHousing.org.

ESCAPE THE MONEY CURSE! For more than 40 years we have refused to work for money. We are dedicated idealists who try to live out the teachings of Jesus within a communal/nomadic lifestyle. We welcome visitors, even if just for a short time. Full-time members share all that we own in common, living simply, and gleaning most of our food and other needs from what society throws out. We try to share these and other Christian principles through words and actions. We distribute self-produced literature and DVD's, while counselling those in need. Most of us live in vehicles and travel constantly. Visitors need not endorse all of our beliefs, but they would be expected to share their own ideals with others as we travel and to share responsibilities. It's a narrow path, but one of adventure, brotherhood and intimacy with God. Will you walk it with us? www.jesuschristians.com email: fold@idl.net.au

SERVICES

RAISE MONEY AND HEAL YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH MONEY - We teach and do everything from social media strategies and e-appeals to face-to-face meetings for gifts or investments in a project. We also do moneycoaching which reveals and heals your individual and community's relationship with money so your use of money expresses your values, keeps you on healthy financial footing, and helps you achieve what you want in the world with money as an ally. We offer coaching for individuals, training for groups, and consulting for organizations. Please contact us to find out more. Many free articles are available on our blogsite: http://www.raisingclarity.com/blog. Contact Beth Raps: bethraps@raisingclarity.com, 304-258-2533, or Visit www.raisingclarity.com

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OPPORTUNITIES

THE ECOVILLAGE INSTITUTE - The purpose for EVI is to enlighten the whole of the human experience. All our programs take place at the heart of Cite Ecologique of NH Ecovillage. To learn more, please visit our web site www.evi.life or call 603-331-1669. "Live Free and Inspired"

VOLUNTEER IN HAWAII! Your new path awaits. Find community in a dynamic environment that aims to be a living model for a healthy and vibrant planet. Share 120-acres of jungle paradise with as many as 200 guests, volunteers, and staff, while enjoying fresh, local meals served 3 times a day, up to 50 classes in permaculture, yoga, wellness, and spirituality each week, and much more. Embodying the strength and beauty of the Big Island, Kalani Honua is a non-profit retreat center supporting local and global transformation through nature, culture, and wellness. Located on the breathtaking Red Road on the Puna coastline, we invite you to recharge as you find yourself here amidst the raw, creative energy of Hawaii Island. Kalani offers multiple options ranging from 1-month Sabbaticals to extended stay Volunteer and Skilled Trade programs. Volunteers provide service in our Kitchen, Housekeeping, Landscaping, Maintenance, and Permaculture Departments and enjoy all of our on-campus amenities and classes. Skilled Trade scholarships are awarded by application and are available in a variety of disciplines, including construction, maintenance, vehicle and small engine mechanics, IT and culinary arts (to name a few). For more information on Kalani and our programs: Visit our website at www.kalani.com/volunteer. Contact our Volunteer Office: volunteeroffice@kalani.com 808-965-0468 ext. 117

SUCCESSFUL HIGH-END CUSTOM CABINET SHOP ON SHANNON FARM COMMUNITY is seeking a buyer for our privately owned business. We are located near the Blue Ridge Mountains of Central Virginia about 27 miles southwest of Charlottesville. There would be time available for learning our business and learning about joining Shannon Farm Community (see listing page on ic.org or in the Directory). Our exit plan is to gradually hand over the reins of the business as we edge towards semi-retirement. Business began in 1977! www.heartwoodkitchens.com. Respond to jenny@heartwoodkitchens.com.

THE LUKAS COMMUNITY, a Rudolf Steiner inspired community, is currently seeking compassionate, hardworking individuals, couples or small families to live with and help care for our developmentally challenged residents in beautiful extended-family homes and to participate in our therapeutic programs, including weaving, woodworking, organic gardens, animals, crafts, music, drama and dance. For more information, go to www.lukascommunity.org. To apply, please send a resume and cover letter to David Spears at lukas@lukascommunity.org or The Lukas Community, PO Box 137, Temple, NH 03084.

THE FELLOWSHIP COMMUNITY is seeking full-time co-workers to care for our elderly members. Successful applicants will have a strong desire to lead a life of service in a community setting designed to support the needs of 65 elderly members. About half of our members require an advanced level of care for their activities of daily living. We offer in-service training. A co-worker's experience at the Fellowship is unique in that it allows for activity in a variety of areas beyond the direct care of the elderly, from the farm to the kitchen and from building maintenance to participation in one of our workshops. We are an intergenerational community whose older members are surrounded by people of all ages, includ-

ing young families. We are seeking people interested in living on campus, working full-time and taking part in a community building process inspired by anthroposophy. See our website: fellowshipcommunity.org

PUBLICATIONS, BOOKS, WEBSITES, WORKSHOPS

BEST OF COMMUNITIES BOOKS - We've distilled the most insightful and helpful articles on the topics that you—our readers—have told us you care about most, and have organized them into 15 scintillating books. Learn about Starting 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

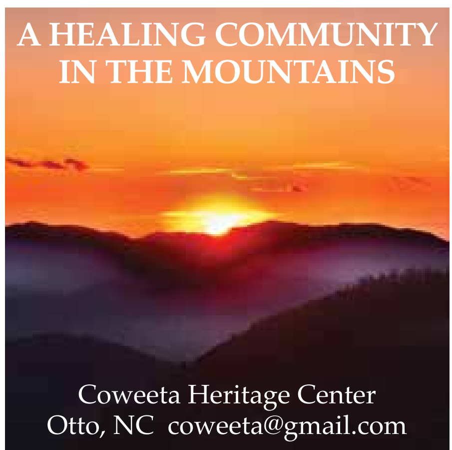
"REINHABITING THE VILLAGE: COCREATING OUR FUTURE" - created by Jamaica Stevens and Executive Produced by Keyframe-Entertainment - is a 352-page graphically rich, softcover book showcasing the work of 12 Visionary Artists and over 60 Contributing Authors. The book features "Voices from the Village" sharing their experience, best practices, strategies and resources to empower communities through practical wisdom and inspiring perspectives. The book offers a roadmap and blueprint for building a legacy for our future through the shared development of social technology tools, innovative templates, models, permaculture guidelines and resources that are useful to communities everywhere. Buy the book at: http://keyframe-entertainment.com/culture-art/reinhabitingthevillage/ Discounted bulk book orders are available, please contact info@keyframe-entertainment for more info.

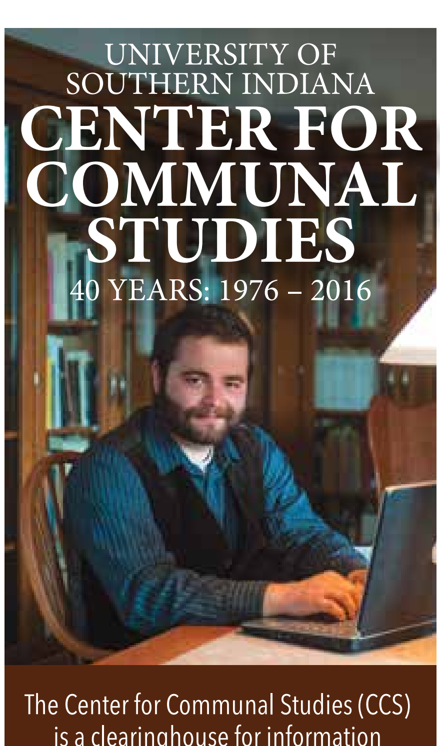
WE DISCONNECT: TO RECONNECT - A twice monthly email newsletter on taking a break from the web, smartphones and mass media. From social media vacations to going entirely off the grid. tinyletter.com/wedisconnect

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 (cocreating the Group Works Deck) and are on the national cohouseholding 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!

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!





The Center for Communal Studies (CCS) is a clearinghouse for information and research on communal groups worldwide, past and present. Located on the campus of the University of Southern Indiana in Evansville.

ARCHIVAL RESEARCH COLLECTION

We invite researchers to use the Center's Collection of primary and secondary materials on more than 600 historic and contemporary communes. The Collection includes over 10,000 images and a reading room.

Visit: www.usi.edu/library/university-archives-and-special-collections. Email the archivist: jagreene@usi.edu.

REGIONAL RESEARCH

The Center is part of a rich array of historic communal resources within a 30-mile radius of Evansville that includes the Harmonist and Owenite village of New Harmony, Indiana. The Center sponsors lectures, conferences and exhibits, and has an abundance of programming resources.

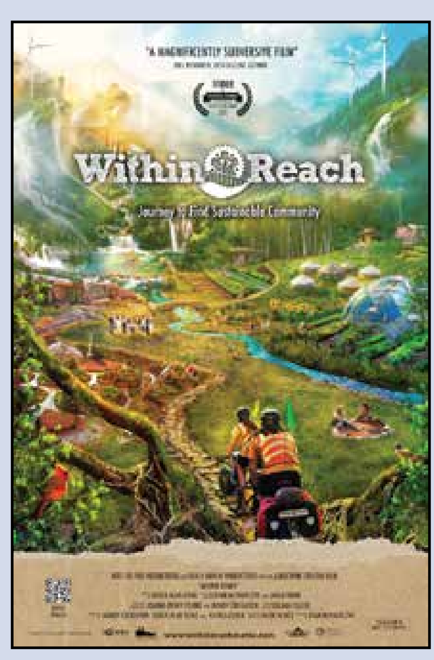
Visit: www.usi.edu/liberal-arts/communal.center

CENTER PRIZES AND RESEARCH TRAVEL GRANT

The Center annually awards cash prizes for the best student papers on historic or contemporary communal groups, intentional communities, and utopias. Deadline for submission is 1 March. The Center also annually awards a Research Travel Grant to fund research in our Collection. Applications are due by 1 May.

For information contact: 812-465-1656 or Casey Harison at charison@usi.edu

Within Reach DVD



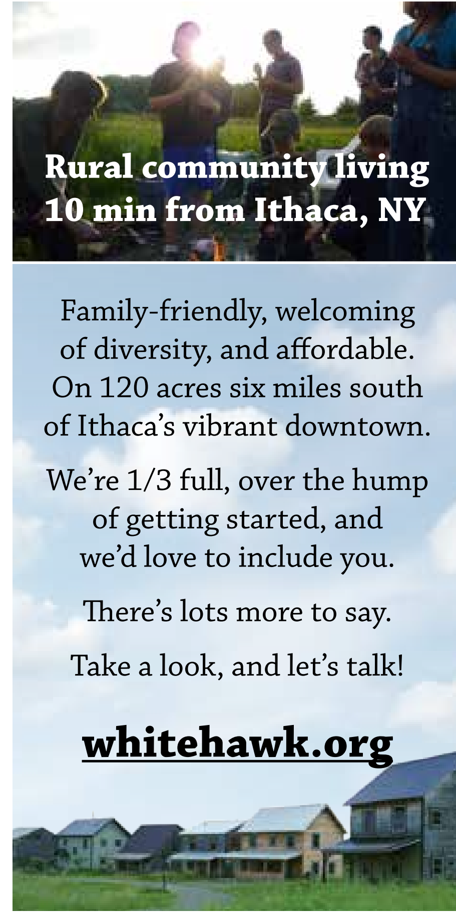
Within Reach is a film documenting one resilient couple's 6,500 mile bicycling journey across the United States in search of sustainable communities.

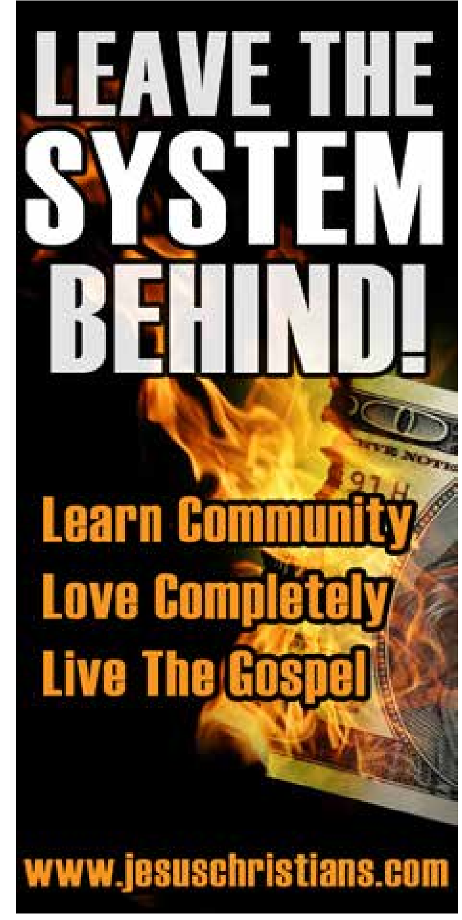
Mandy and Ryan gave up their corporate jobs and houses to travel thousands of miles in search of a new home, while also looking within.

One of the most important questions facing the world today is "Can humans live sustainably?" This film answers this in a resounding way – Yes!

Meet people from around the country showing that there is a better way we can live together on this planet. It is not only possible, it is already underway!

Find out more at
www.ic.org/community-bookstore/product/within-reach/





REAL ESTATE

STUNNING, SUNNY SW style adobe home with in-floor radiant heat, large master bedroom, walk in closet + 2 person shower, deck off master. 3 bedrooms + office, 2 bathrooms. Granite counters, stainless steel appliances, mountain views, fireplace, sweet front porch, landscaped. Colorful SW Patio with fountain and fire pit. Includes carport and off-street parking. Partially furnished. Text Sondra@ 970-749-6120, www.heartwoodcohousing.com

FIORI HILL'S 17+ ACRES IN HILLSBOROUGH, NC, homes dedicated to create sense of place and neighborhood. All ages, green gardens, koi pond, paths, common house, green craftsman cottages. Follow riverwalk to Weaver Street co-op. Fiori Hill offers a feeling of home in a true "Village Pocket Neighborhood".www.UrbanCottageProperties.com

HOUSE FOR SALE, TAOS, NM - A wonderful opportunity to join Valverde Commons, a mature and thriving community in stunning Taos, NM. This brand new 2 BR, 1.5 Bath brand new home has staggering views of Taos Mountain and is only a short walk to historic district. Contact Carol Wells @ carolwellsam@gmail.com or Carolyn Schlam @valverdecommons@aol.com

TWO ADJACENT WOODED LOTS NORTH OF COLUMBIA, MO. Beautiful and rolling, native plant diversity, seasonal creek. Seeking ecology-minded folks interested in community gardens and animal care, and cottage industry. One lot, 10 acres/90k with pond. The other, 14 acres/140k with water, electric, metal building, and driveway. More on ic.org

DO YOU DREAM OF BUILDING A GREEN HOME LIKE MY FATHER DID? We are selling a beautiful timber-frame strawbale house plus adjacent lot for 445k. This hand built home has three floors, three bedrooms and two baths; heat is solar/electric hot water within radiant wood and concrete floors; cooling is achieved by whole house exhaust and ceiling fans; septic is a combination gray water tank/bed and composting toilet. The house has an electric range, fridge, dishwasher and washer/dryer stack. There are two porches, a living roof, big closets, ample storage space and workshop area. Kitchen cabinets are hickory and counters Paperstone. The metal roof is 10 years old. The composting toilet by Clivus has service available by NutriCycle Systems. The property is located at EcoVillage, a self-governing HOA in northern Virginia: http://ecovillageloudoun.com/lots/ecovillage-lot-14/. View property on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iy04SCund1Q. Contact Nancy: NancyeFunk@gmail.com.

LIVE YOUR DREAM - AND HELP FIC! -- Incredible property now for sale, which includes a $10,000 donation by the seller to FIC when it is sold! 80 acre retreat in the mountains of Western NC has everything needed to start and sustain a Community of 35-40 members in hard housing, plus 100 or more in primitive housing and camping. Includes Canopy zip line business, orchards, honey bees, trout farm, bath houses, greenhouses, laundry facilities, workout room, hydro power generator, chicken coop, pig sty, picnic shelters, 18 hole disc golf course, hiking & biking trails, and much more! $1,250,000. Owner financing available. Contact Cleve Young @ 828-765-9696, or email ads@ic.org.

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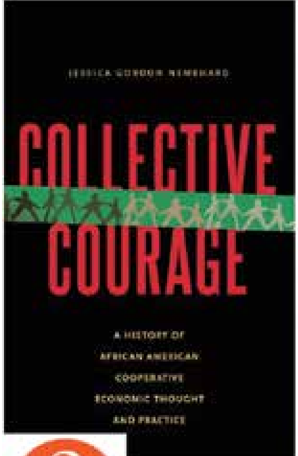

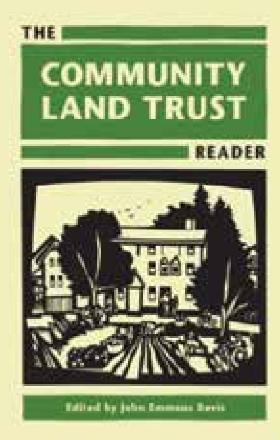

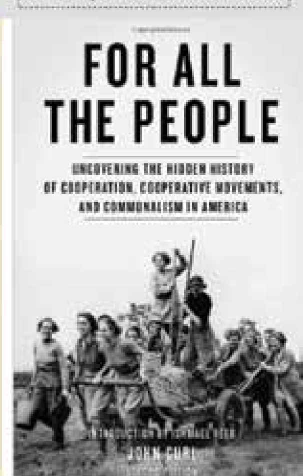

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Community Bookstore
www.ic.org/community-bookstore

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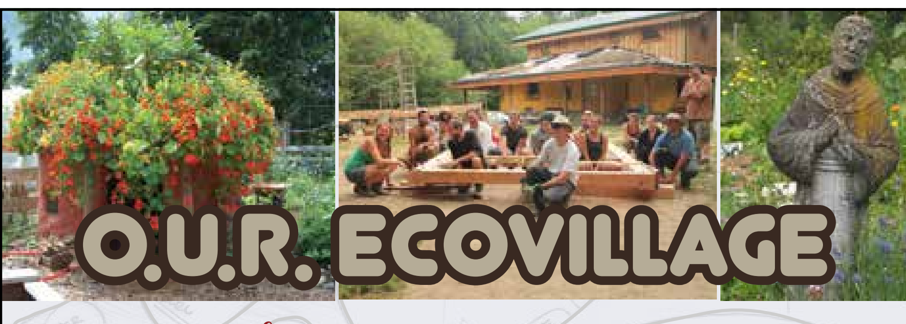
When you join the Fellowship for Intentional Community, your contribution supports projects like the Communities Directory, Communities magazine, and the Intentional Communities Website (www.ic.org)

Join online at www.ic.org/Membership



Sustainable community...for a change!

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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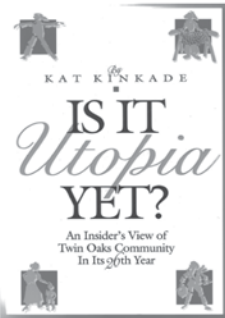
info@ourecovillage.org



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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MOBILE HOME PARKS: A FAST AND INEXPENSIVE PATH TO COHOUSING

(continued from p. 43)

Management

When you buy your park it is very likely that people will be living there. If there is nobody living there, you can start your community from scratch but beware, a park with no people may have infrastructure issues or worse. If people are living there you are now responsible for providing them a safe place to live and in return, they pay you rent. Don't worry! You don't have to call yourself a "landlord" or feel bad that you are exploiting your position. Just treat people fairly and be strict about your park rules.

If you clean up your park and create good bonds with the new and existing residents you will begin to attract more people who care about their homes and neighborhoods. This is a good first step toward building community in your park.

There is a lot to learn about park management, much more than can be covered in this article. If you find yourself in the position where you own a park and want to better the neighborhood, please give me a call and we can discuss different places you can go to learn the trade.

Go Get 'Em!

We've covered some of the basics you will need to evaluate a mobile home or RV park. In addition to what is listed, you can do research online, talk to local real estate professionals, call manufactured housing dealers, and start to visit some local parks to imagine what it would be like to create your community using mobile home and RV parks as a foundation. Parks will require less work, less time, and less risk than building your community from scratch.

Today, mobile home parks house six percent of the US population. When people like us realize the potential that mobile home parks have for inexpensive community living, I believe the concept will become one of the most popular forms of communal housing available.

William Noel owns and operates mobile home parks throughout the country and is a lifelong community builder. Will invites you to contact him at Noel@ElkhornGroup.org to learn more about using mobile home parks to achieve your communal housing dreams.

ECONOMICS AND COOPERATION IN COMMUNITY: THE ULTIMATE CONTEST

(continued from p. 53)

That's a wow moment, when one realizes the vast potential of humanity if it could only muster the consciousness to transcend its animal instincts and become fully human. The measure of such success, I believe, would be the degree in which we stopped competing and started cooperating.

What can you do to forward humanity's evolution? First, of course, advance your own. Be a living example. Have enough dignity to feel good about yourself without making other people losers. Find common ground with others instead of nitpicking differences. Talk about this—because right now hardly anyone ever talks about it much. Begin an intelligent and compassionate dialogue when the opportunity arises. Write about it. Think about it. Imagine.

I'm very curious to know if someone (you) can really imagine a world without competition. It is simply fascinating to see the wheels turning in someone's head, even if the response is one of denial or defensiveness. One more seed of consciousness planted. It grows with a little care and when a bunch of good people start cultivating that little powerhouse of a meme, the world changes. It must. And remember, we don't need *everyone* to help us make this change. As Margaret Mead famously said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." ❧

Dan Schultz is co-director of Maitreya Mountain Village (www.maitreyamountanvillage.com), which creates intentional, caring community and farming in an off-grid, wilderness setting. Dan hosts and produces a talk radio program called New Culture Radio focused on sustainability, and together with his partner Jane leads Transition Del Norte in Northwestern California.

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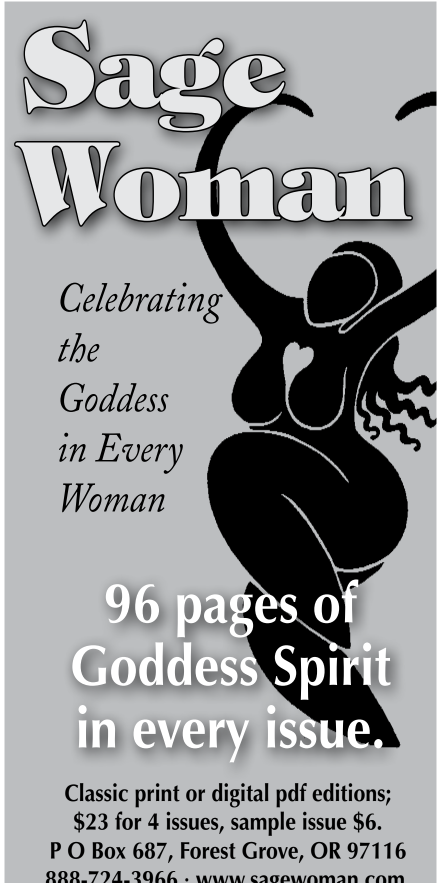

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TOGETHER RESILIENT: Why This Book?

Thoughts on Building Community in the Age of Climate Disruption

Once upon a time, the world was infinite. The edges of the map simply defined what was known, not all that was. Then it became common knowledge that the earth was round, and "the world" started to become something finite. When we were able to see the entire planet, in photos taken from outer space, it really started to set in: this is it. The planet we call home has very clear limits and boundaries, which define the parameters for our survival. We can't take it for granted.

Intentional community is a kind of activism. People who create intentional communities do so because they see problems with the values and principles on which society is based and they want to create something better, and at least in some small way, they hope it will inspire others. But how do we know what's "better"? Whatever it is, toxifying our environment, destabilizing ecosystems, and potentially making the planet uninhabitable for human life are all parts of what needs to change.

Indigenous peoples and utopian visionaries have been warning of the dangers of environmental destruction and depletion for a long time. But humanity has taken a much longer time to recognize it as the existential threat it is. Despite an overwhelming scientific consensus and demonstrable impacts, there is still resistance and denial. How can this be?

Certainly one reason is that climate disruption has not caused enough economic disruption to sufficiently disrupt the lives of those with the most power. But it's more than that. Climate change is terrifying. The factors at play are so monumental, the problems so complex, and the power to effect change on those levels is so beyond the reach of any one of us. Credible predictions about the kind of world we may be creating, one that many of us alive today will have to live through, are enough to make anyone panic. In short, we're overwhelmed.

But most people no longer need convincing that there's a problem, and more than ever people are looking for solutions. Intentional community is part of the solution.

When you're around people and interact with them regularly, and when you have to make important economic decisions with them, you develop intimacy. It's not always easy, but it builds our muscles for empathy and compassion, helping us make choices that are good for all people. This intimacy fills a hole that people usually fill with unsustainable consumerism. And it helps us deal with the overwhelm of being human in today's world. Confronted with the terrifying situation we find ourselves in, facing it together is our only hope.

Whether you're an anti-capitalist or believe in capitalism 2.0, it's clear that our current economic system reinforces the social and political systems that are destroying the planet. Guaranteeing that all people have access to the resources they need to meet their basic needs must be foundational. Intentional community provides a look at how we can take care of everyone, equitably and sustainably.

Intentional community shows us that we can live happy, satisfying lives with less. It shows us that, as the author of *Together Resilient* says, sustainability doesn't have to suck. We're afraid of poverty and deprivation. Sharing is the key. Sharing, on a material level as well as social, is the pathway to benefiting from the earth's resources in a sustainable and enjoyable way.

So, why this book? Because, collectively, humanity has the answers, we have the tools, we have the pieces of the puzzle. We just have to put them together.

Together Resilient: Building Community in the Age of Climate Disruption is available for order at ic.org/community-bookstore/product/together-resilient-building-community. ❧

TOGETHER Resilient
Building Community in the Age of Climate Disruption
MA'IKWE LUDWIG

Sky Blue (sky@ic.org) is Executive Director of the Fellowship for Intentional Community.

Camphill is a worldwide movement of vibrant lifesharing communities where people with & without developmental disabilities strive together to reach their full potential through a combination of community life, the arts and work on the land.

A calming rhythm in daily life, boundaries on mass media and the extremes of popular culture, and an orientation to interpersonal relationships help to focus therapeutic work on individual development. Camphill emphasizes identifying and promoting the specific gifts and contributions of each community member with and without disabilities, and facilitating their choices. Everyone in Camphill contributes to the sustaining of the community according to his or her ability, striking a balance between personal interest and community need.

Meet some of the Communities!

Triform Camphill Community

The main focus at Triform Camphill Community is special needs youth guidance, where the ideals of inclusion and the development of individual potential are in the forefront. Triform's programs promote confidence, selfworth, independence and achievement on many levels among the students. Contact Siral Crane: (518) 851-9320.

Heartbeet Lifesharing

Heartbeet Lifesharing is a land-based community located in Northern Vermont, where residents are offered a variety of opportunities to develop new skills and pursue a vocation. The community is home to almost 50 adults, including individuals with special needs. Contact Coworker Admissions: (802) 472-3285.

Plowshare Farm

Plowshare Farm is an intentional community of about 45 people, some with developmental disabilities, in southern New Hampshire where we strive to create a different way of living, serving and learning which is sustainable, inclusive and reaching toward the future. Considering an alternative lifestyle? Please see our website, plowsharefarm.org, for opportunities. Contact Kimberly Dorn: (603) 547-2547

Camphill Village Kimberton Hills

Camphill Village Kimberton Hills is a dynamic farming, gardening, and handcrafting intentional community that includes adults with developmental disabilities. Over 100 individuals, living and working side by side, create a caring community for people of all ages and varied abilities on 432 acres in Chester County, Pennsylvania. Contact Craig Brown: (610) 935-3963.

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What Readers say about Communities

I love Communities magazine. Deciding to be communal is the best decision I've ever made in my life. Communities has been there from the beginning.

–**Patch Adams, M.D.**, author and founder of the Gesundheit Institute

Communities has become one of our go-to sources for thought-provoking pieces about people opting out of the rat race and living life on their own terms.

–**Christian Williams**, Editor, Utne Reader

Each issue is a refreshing antidote to the mainstream media's "me, me, me" culture. Communities overflows with inspiring narratives from people who are making "we" central to their lives instead.

–**Murphy Robinson**, Founder of Mountainsong Expeditions

Community has to be the future if we are to survive. Communities plays such a critical role in moving this bit of necessary culture change along.

–**Chuck Durrett**, The Cohousing Company, McCamant & Durrett Architects

For more than 40 years Communities has done an outstanding job of promoting the communitarian spirit as well as serving intentional communities and other groups coming together for the common good.

–**Timothy Miller**, Professor of Religious Studies, University of Kansas

For many years we've been associated with and have strongly supported Communities because we're convinced of its unique contribution to the communities movement in the United States and the world.

–**Lisa and Belden Paulson, Ph.D.**, cofounders of High Wind community

Communities has been important to me ever since I began researching intentional communities back in 1980.… The Editors have always been willing to include critical articles which challenge accepted norms.

–**Dr. Bill Metcalf**, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia

Communities is an invaluable resource.

–**Professor Emeritus Yaacov Oved,** Tel-Aviv University

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