

GIFTS OF THE PANDEMIC • COHOUSING • OPTIONS FOR ELDERERS

# COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

Winter 2020 • Issue #189



## COMMUNITY IN THE AGE OF CORONAVIRUS

Glimpses of the Future

Opening Pandemic's Box

Urban, Rural, and Virtual Community

T.P. at T.O., "Welcome Om" to Rainbow

Adaptations at Glenora Farm, JPUSA, and More



## HOLISTIC SUSTAINABILITY SEMESTER

**Two Internationally Recognized Certificates:**

- Permaculture Design Certificate
- Ecovillage Design Education Certificate

Full Meal Plan  
Ecovillage Immersion  
On-site Housing  
25 Guest Instructors  
Interpersonal Connections  
And so much more!

"I learned more about myself in 12 weeks than I did in 4 years of college!"

-Jaime, Student

"Life at Lost Valley is like a dream. The community envisions itself as a part of nature, not excluded from it. I stepped into passion by reconnecting with the natural world."

-Onjae, Student

**2021 PROGRAM DATES: COMING SOON!**

Contact us or visit  
[lostvalley.org](http://lostvalley.org) to learn more!

Email: [programs@lostvalley.org](mailto:programs@lostvalley.org)  
541-937-3351



# Please Support COMMUNITIES!

**D**ear COMMUNITIES readers and friends, A year ago, Global Ecovillage Network–United States (GEN-US) became the new publisher of COMMUNITIES, continuing the journal’s nearly 50-year publishing tradition. The magazine survived and exists today only because of an outpouring of financial and moral support from readers like you, who refused to let it go the way of too many publications which have needed to shut their doors in the face of a changing world and new economic circumstances.

We see COMMUNITIES: *Life in Cooperative Culture* as a *guidebook* for that changing world—one that will help us find ways to live together more effectively in a new age in which we cannot ignore or escape the feedback loops, the effects of our actions and choices on the planet and on one another. If any doubt remained that we are living in an age of *koyaanisqatsi* (“unbalanced life” in Hopi), this past year of pandemic, racial disparity laid bare, climate chaos, threats to democratic institutions, and much more has eliminated illusions about that. And at the same time, if those of us involved in intentional community and other manifestations of cooperative culture ever doubted that our choices held value and long-term relevance and applicability for our larger world, 2020 has also eliminated our questions about that. Sharing the examples, lessons, stories, visions, practical guidance, and insights emerging from experiments in creating cooperative, regenerative culture in a world that sorely needs it has never seemed more important or urgent than it is today.

In service to that mission, we depend partly on **subscription** ([gen-us.net/subscribe](http://gen-us.net/subscribe)) income to stay in print—and are appealing to you to renew your subscription, give gift subscriptions, encourage others to subscribe, and consider subscribing at “supporter” or “sustainer” levels if it is possible for you.

And at the same time, we depend on *more than* subscriptions to keep publishing. In fact, subscription income currently covers less than half of our annual expenses—and in fact, even adding in individual-copy, bundled-issue, and wholesale distribution of the magazine, “sales” as an entire category typically gets us only 45 to 60 percent toward our total budgetary needs. In this, we are not alone. Among what we consider “sister” publications, *Orion* derives only 30 percent of its budget from sales,

and *YES!* less than half as well.

In our case, **advertising** ([gen-us.net/advertising](http://gen-us.net/advertising)) income typically provides a 12 to 15 percent net boost to our budget. There is substantial room for growth in this area, and we encourage and welcome advertising from you or anyone you know with something to share that would be of interest to our readers.

But the rest of our budget, the key element that allows us to stay afloat financially, comes from **donations** ([gen-us.net/donate/magazine](http://gen-us.net/donate/magazine)).

If you see value in our work, we invite you to contribute, as many of you did last year, to making sure that COMMUNITIES can continue to exist and work toward realizing its full potential. At the end of last year, we raised over \$30,000 in pledges (and eventual donations) to allow us to fulfill outstanding subscriptions and meet the costs of transitioning to our new publisher. This year, we are aiming to raise \$20,000—the amount that we believe necessary to avoid staff layoffs and other measures that could interfere with the magazine’s ability to thrive over the coming year.

We on staff are determined to do all we can to keep this forum for long-form community storytelling, information-sharing, and inspiration alive and available for a world in need of resources like this one. In this effort, as is true with virtually all alternative media, we rely on extra financial help from those who see the value in the service we provide to the world.

You can find all the information you need about donating here: [www.gen-us.net/donate/magazine](http://www.gen-us.net/donate/magazine). Please note that, especially with larger amounts, payments via check (made out to COMMUNITIES Magazine, and mailed to Attn: Linda Joseph, CMag 64001 County Road DD Moffat, CO 81143 USA), and/or “Friends and Family” PayPal payments (sent to [publisher@gen-us.net](mailto:publisher@gen-us.net)), assure that the full amount of your donation comes to us. We welcome your donation in any form, however, and for those without a PayPal account, an online donation via SimpleCirc may be the easiest method: [simplecirc.com/communities/item/1920/donation-to-communities-magazine](http://simplecirc.com/communities/item/1920/donation-to-communities-magazine).

Thank you so much for your support and readership! We look forward to many more years of COMMUNITIES, with the aid of people like you.

Chris Roth  
Editor, COMMUNITIES

# COMMUNITY IN THE AGE OF CORONAVIRUS

- 1 **Please Support COMMUNITIES!**
- 4 **Views from GEN-US:  
Invitations to Share Your Stories, Join Authors' List**
- 5 **Gratitude**
- 6 **Dancing in Dangerous Times, Alternative Cover Candidates**
- 7 **COVID-19, Covid, coronavirus: Capitalization Dilemmas!**
- 8 **Notes from the Editor: The Year that Changed Everything**  
**Chris Roth**  
The Editor endures the roller-coaster ride of 2020—not just theoretically, as a spectator or an article curator—and shares a personal update about family, community, and more than you may want to know.
- 12 **We Still Have Toilet Paper:  
COVID-19 Pandemic Response at Twin Oaks Community**  
**Stephan Nashoba**  
Crisis situations like this are full of contradictions. We see both the worst and the best in people. We feel both cabin fever and cozy togetherness. We have both scarcity and abundance.
- 16 **Gifts of the Pandemic: Voices from Glenora Farm Community**  
**Alicia, Benjamin, Lisa, Veronika, Adola McWilliam, and Lucinde Metcalfe**  
Isolation can bring a sense of safety, togetherness, and offer an opportunity to be who we really are and to do things we consider important. It can make our lives easier, truer, gentler on the earth, and even more cheerful.
- 19 **The Rainbow Gathering and COVID-19: How a physically dispersed anarchist community addressed the pandemic**  
**Karin Zirk**  
If you have to meet on the land, and you cannot do that without creating unsafe conditions in a pandemic, then what? Amidst many diverse viewpoints and voices, enter Om From Home.
- 24 **Pandemic Practices**  
**Meridith Owensby**  
Our community's existence and practices have served to preserve joy and hope during this pandemic season. We have even found ways to embrace new life rhythms together.
- 26 **Pulled Toward and Away: How C-19 Has Elevated the Attraction of ICs but Pulled Us onto Screens**  
**Colin Doyle**  
At the same time as community members appreciate their simple blessings more, their friends in a neighboring area or relatives back home are more atomized than ever, sadly separated.



Richard Getler

## 29 Glimpses of the Future

See

This is the future, just as it is our past: Impromptu community, strangers, friends, family, neighbors, and intentional, chosen community, coming together to protect and support each other.

## 31 Coronavirus Adaptation in an Urban Community: Applying Difficult, Effective Precautions at Jesus People USA

Lyda Jackson

JPUSA has found that when facing great challenges, opportunities for even greater creativity arise. The pandemic has demonstrated the necessity for community and connection in the world at large.

## 36 Two Elders Locked Down in Ecuador

Rev. Jacqueline Zaleski Mackenzie, Ph.D.

We had no idea when we moved that we had chosen the best possible location, during a worldwide pandemic, for a retired couple to be located. The reasons are varied and nearly all positive.

## 39 How Have Intentional Communities Fared through the Pandemic?

Cynthia Tina

Some rural communities report being basically unaffected or even experiencing positive changes since coronavirus, while other more urban communities have found themselves especially challenged.

## 45 Coronavirus Response in Cohousing

Indra Waters

On the cohousing-l listserv, participants discuss how their communities can best deal with the new circumstances we all now face.

## 52 A Cooperative Option for Seniors in the Age of COVID-19

Deborah Altus

The sense of community spirit and connectedness appears to be sustaining the co-op and allowing its members to weather the pandemic more effectively than those living on the outside.

## 55 Pursuing a Community Dream

Rachael Love Cohen

Cue COVID. Our local playgrounds were cordoned off; our beaches closed. "It's time," I heard myself whisper. "It's time to take the leap." I understood that my calling was not just to carry the vision, but to implement it.

## 59 From Five Earths to One, Part Three: Transforming Our Economy

Jan Spencer

Our society and economic system need radical shifts to bring out the best in us and to help us exist within the boundaries of the natural world. The virus suggests that we may be up to the task.

## 64 REACH

## 68 Community Economics: Opening Pandemic's Box

Laird Schaub and Terry O'Keefe

If you have ever thought about starting a community-based business, there may never have been a better time than right now.



## ON THE COVER

Residents celebrate a member's 80th birthday with a pandemic-adapted parade at Rocky Hill Cohousing, Northampton, Massachusetts. Photo by Richard Getler.

# COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

## EDITOR

Chris Roth (*Lost Valley/Meadowsong*)

## ART DIRECTOR

Yulia Zarubina-Brill

## ADVERTISING MANAGER

River Paige (*Lost Valley/Meadowsong*)

## SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER

Melissa Ketchum (*EarthArt Village*)

## ACCOUNTANT

Kim Scheidt (*Red Earth Farms*)

## WEBSITE/TECH SUPPORT

Orlando Balbas

## BACK ISSUE FULFILLMENT

Catherine Hammond (*Lost Valley/Meadowsong*)

## PUBLISHER LIAISON

Linda Joseph (*EarthArt Village*)

## EDITORIAL REVIEW BOARD

Crystal Farmer (*Charlotte Cohousing*)

Valerie Renwick (*Twin Oaks*)

Diana Leafé Christian (*Earthaven*)

Linda Joseph (*EarthArt Village*)

Lois Arkin (*Los Angeles Eco-Village*)

Giovanni Ciarlo (*Huehucoyotl*)

Daniel Greenberg (*Auroville*)

**COMMUNITIES** (ISSN 0199-9346) is published quarterly by the Global Ecovillage Network—United States (GEN-US) at 64001 County Road DD, Moffat CO 81143. Postmaster: Send address changes to Communities, 81868 Lost Valley Ln, Dexter OR 97431. Indexed in the Alternative Press Index.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** \$30 US, \$40 outside US for four issues via periodical/surface mail. Single copies are \$10 postpaid US, \$13 postpaid Canada, \$18 postpaid other international. All payments in US dollars. Available from Communities, 81868 Lost Valley Ln, Dexter OR 97431; [order@gen-us.net](mailto:order@gen-us.net); 541-937-5221 for more info. (please leave message); 719-588-7828 for payments (please leave message); [gen-us.net/subscribe](http://gen-us.net/subscribe).

**BACK ISSUES:** Communities, 81868 Lost Valley Ln, Dexter OR 97431; [order@gen-us.net](mailto:order@gen-us.net); 541-937-5221 for more info. (please leave message); 719-588-7828 for payments (please leave message); [gen-us.net/back-issues](http://gen-us.net/back-issues).

**EDITORIAL OFFICE:** Chris Roth, Editor, Communities, 81868 Lost Valley Ln, Dexter OR 97431; [editor@gen-us.net](mailto:editor@gen-us.net); 541-937-5221 (please leave message).

© 2020 by Global Ecovillage Network—United States (GEN-US) and individual authors. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA. Opinions expressed by authors and correspondents are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher.

**GLOBAL ECOVILLAGE NETWORK—UNITED STATES:** GEN-US, c/o Linda Joseph, 64001 County Road DD, Moffat CO 81143; [linda@gen-us.net](mailto:linda@gen-us.net); 719-588-7828 (please leave message); [gen-us.net](http://gen-us.net).

**REPRINT PERMISSION:** Community groups may reprint with permission. Please contact Communities, 81868 Lost Valley Ln, Dexter OR 97431; [communities@gen-us.net](mailto:communities@gen-us.net); 541-937-5221 (please leave message).

**ADVERTISING:** Communities Advertising Manager, [ads@gen-us.net](mailto:ads@gen-us.net); 910-617-6136.

**WEBSITE:** [gen-us.net/communities](http://gen-us.net/communities).

This magazine printed by Sundance Press, Tucson AZ.

## Views from GEN-US



Richard Getler

## An Invitation to Share Your Story

*“The stories we tell literally make the world.” —Michael Margolis*

In this time of global unraveling, millions are losing hope that a regenerative, meaningful, and just future is even possible. But those of us putting our shoulders to the grindstone of this “Great Turning” know better because we are actively manifesting the change we wish to see. Sharing our personal narratives can help others live into this emerging New Story of our being in community with each other and all life.

**So, what’s your story?** How did you come to find your passion or purpose? How has living in community transformed you, surprised you, or challenged you? What moments have scared you, humbled you, or made you laugh out loud?

Even if nothing immediately comes to mind, please register at [gen-us.net/stories](http://gen-us.net/stories) to join an intimate and entertaining online story sharing circle with other communitarians from around the world. Following some general guidance you can choose to bring a story to share or join a circle with a mystery prompt only given on the spot!

During and after the circle, you will receive feedback and support to further develop, record, and—if you like—share your story in a local or global Storytelling Summit in spring 2021 along with peers and luminaries from across the globe.

Together, let’s remake the world through our stories of personal and cultural transformation!

—Daniel Greenberg

## Join Our Authors’ List

Speaking of storytelling, we welcome new article and photo contributions to upcoming COMMUNITIES issues. Subscribers to our “Call for Articles” email list receive announcements and article prompts for each new quarterly theme. To join, please send an email to [editor@gen-us.net](mailto:editor@gen-us.net) with the subject line “Cmag authors list.” Please share the riches of your own experiences by submitting your writing and photography!

—Chris Roth

# Great Gratitude!

Global Ecovillage Network-US (GEN-US) is so thankful for all the love, support, and contributions of subscribers, readers, advertisers, everyone who shares, gifts, and introduces COMMUNITIES to others—and to each and every one who donated to the relaunch of COMMUNITIES magazine with GEN-US as Publisher.

We've completed our first year and started our second, with five quarterly issues now under our belts, as of this Winter 2020 issue. We appreciate, invite, and welcome your ongoing participation in this unique journal of, on, by, and for communities and cooperative culture, in any or all of these ways. Please consider directing end-of-year donations to support COMMUNITIES to flourish in 2021—a year for getting even stronger, together. Wishing all a peaceful holiday season and New Year!

—Linda Joseph

**Donate to COMMUNITIES!**  
[gen-us.net/donate/magazine](http://gen-us.net/donate/magazine)



## EXPERIENCE COOPERATIVE LIVING IN NEW YORK CITY



**Established in 1980**, we are a 60 person intentional community. We live in 7 comfortable, well-maintained houses, with gardens and a small swimming pool, on the north shore of Staten Island, a short walk from the free ferry to Manhattan.

**Learn** about collective decision making, problem solving, and community living. Share resources and shrink your carbon footprint. We have space available.

**Monthly expenses** are very affordable and include food, utilities, laundry facilities, toiletries, and wifi.

If you are interested, contact Susan at [info@ganas.org](mailto:info@ganas.org)

For more information see [www.ganas.org](http://www.ganas.org)



### Deluxe 2200 Square Foot Victorian Duplex for Sale in Liberty Village Cohousing Community, Libertytown, MD

Victorian duplex on fully landscaped site. Efficient & economical Geothermal heating/cooling system. Whole house water softener, 4 Bedrooms, 2 Full baths & eat-in Kitchen w/ceramic tile floors & custom hickory cabinets. Bedroom level Laundry room & large finished attic space for office, out-of-the way playroom or additional Bedroom. First floor Master Bedroom with walk-in closet, counter/sink/make-up area & private screened porch. Large Living room with an adjacent Sunroom or Dining room with a full glass door that opens onto a 18'x10' raised tree-lined Deck overlooking the forest. Full Basement. New range, refrigerator, & washer/dryer laundry center included. \$319,500

Contact Denny Lehman (owner) for additional information at [dennis.lehman@earthlink.net](mailto:dennis.lehman@earthlink.net).

# Dancing in Dangerous Times

My previous blog, “Welcome to the Human Race,” explored the aesthetics of pop music and dance as a cultural phenomenon. #9 links the music and movement to the intellectual, political, and ecological challenges we face when trying to exercise our creativity, and dance in these dangerous times.

What I’m getting at here is that if you have the base of tangible experience that’s rewarding and connecting with community, plus a construct for connecting intellectually with society, that’s pretty much the whole package. Of course, that assumes the center holds—that we aren’t so weighed down with past trauma or so freaked by immediate survival threats. Unfortunately, that’s saying a lot...

[exemplars.world/paul-freundlichs-blog-9-dancing-in-dangerous-times](https://exemplars.world/paul-freundlichs-blog-9-dancing-in-dangerous-times)

—Paul Freundlich

## 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 contribute articles that profile community living and why people choose it, descriptions of what’s difficult and what works well, news about existing and forming communities, or articles that illuminate community experiences—past and present—offering insights into mainstream cultural issues. We also seek articles about cooperative ventures of all sorts—in workplaces, in neighborhoods, among people sharing common interests—and about “creating community where you are.”

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

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

## Submissions Policy

To submit an article, please first request Writers’ Guidelines; email [editor@gen-us.net](mailto:editor@gen-us.net). To obtain Photo Guidelines, email [layout@gen-us.net](mailto:layout@gen-us.net). Both are also available online at [gen-us.net/communities](https://gen-us.net/communities).

## Advertising Policy

Please check [gen-us.net/communities](https://gen-us.net/communities) or email [ads@gen-us.net](mailto:ads@gen-us.net) for advertising information.

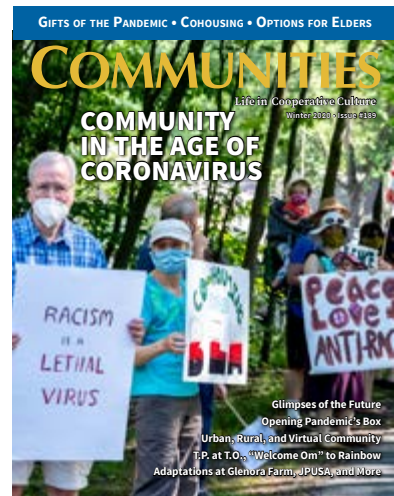
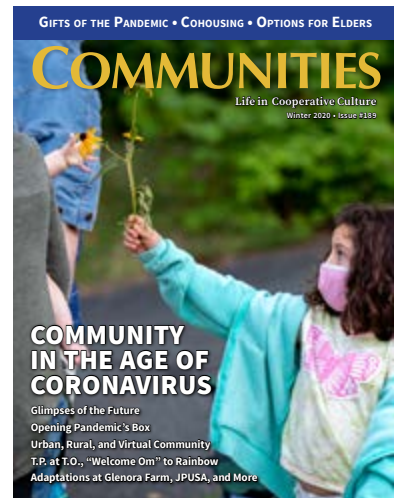
We accept paid advertising in COMMUNITIES because our mission is to provide our readers with helpful and inspiring information—and because advertising revenues help pay the bills.

We handpick our advertisers, selecting only those whose products and services we believe will be helpful to our readers. That said, we are not in a position to verify the accuracy or fairness of statements made in advertisements nor in REACH listings, and publication of ads should not be considered a GEN-US endorsement.

If you experience a problem with an advertisement or listing, we invite you to call this to our attention and we’ll look into it. Our first priority in such instances is to make a good-faith attempt to resolve any differences by working directly with the advertiser/listener and complainant. If, as someone raising a concern, you are not willing to attempt this, we cannot promise that any action will be taken.

## 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.



## Alternative Cover Candidates: An Abundance of Riches

We received an unusual number of photos that proved strong candidates for this issue’s front cover. Above are the covers that might have appeared if the final cover image hadn’t arrived. All photos by Richard Getler except lower left by David Ehrlich/[finphotoworks.com](https://finphotoworks.com).



# COVID-19, Covid, coronavirus: Capitalization Dilemmas!

Those who pay attention to such things will notice that different media outlets have arrived at different conventions for the capitalization of words referring to the virus and disease involved in the current pandemic. Our writers, too, used varying styles in their submitted articles—including sometimes multiple styles within the same article. We edit COMMUNITIES articles in accord with a style sheet meant to promote consistency throughout the publication (for example: serial commas, *yes*; periods in US, UK, and the former USSR, *no*; hyphens or multiple capitals in ecovillage: *no*, unless a community chooses that convention in its own name). However, our existing style sheet did not include entries for terms related to the novel coronavirus, so we've needed to respond on-the-fly to what have suddenly become household words.

We recognize that there are no single “right answers” here, and we respect the choices of other publications who choose to print these words differently, but here are the conventions we've come up with, and our rationale for each:

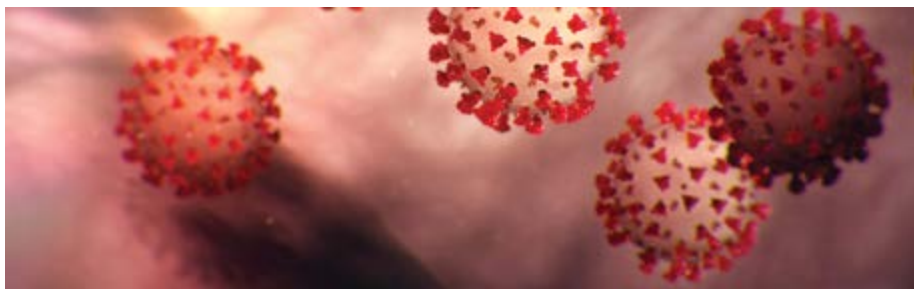
1) We capitalize all letters in **COVID-19**. This seems the most scientifically accurate way of spelling this name, which is an abbreviation (as are, for example, NASA, UNICEF, NASCAR, though some media outlets now spell them with only an initial capital letter because they're pronounced as words rather than as sequences of letters). COVID-19 is the form commonly used in scientific journals and articles, and we want to do our part to respect science.

2) By contrast, we capitalize only the first letter in **Covid** when it refers to, for example, Covid Response Team, Covid Care Group, Covid Meeting, Covid Tax, etc.—all of which are nonscientific names that our authors or their communities have coined to describe entities, happenings, or concepts within their communities. In the context of community communications, ALL-CAPS can be intimidating, so it's understandable that this form would be used when soliciting participation in or cooperation with a group dealing with a phenomenon that is already intimidating enough without being CAPITALIZED.

3) We put **coronavirus** in the lower case unless it's employed in a term like **Age of Coronavirus**. The word coronavirus is generic, which is how we justify this avoidance of capitalization altogether in its case, unless it starts a sentence or is associated with another term that is being capitalized for emphasis.

This is why you'll find COVID-19, Covid, and coronavirus all appearing consistently in those forms throughout this issue, even within a single article where they may appear to clash. **However:** consistency has many benefits in publishing but can also, in some cases, be the hobgoblin of little minds. A countervailing convention is to respect the spellings/styles used by people responding in writing to surveys conducted for an article. Therefore, in *one* article, we chose to toss all of the above conventions out the window, and leave the responses as they were submitted. You'll notice it.

Whatever your capitalization preferences, we think you'll find something for you (and possibly something not for you) in this issue. We hope you enjoy it!



**NEW!**  
School of Integrated Living  
@ Earthaven Ecovillage

Online Workshops  
Virtual Tours  
Free Podcasts



**Finding Your  
Community Home**  
Diana Leafé Christian

**Place-Based  
Living**  
Lee Warren

**Compassionate  
Communication in  
Community**  
Steve Torma

- get inspired -  
- make connections -  
- build community -

SchoolOfIntegratedLiving.org



**F** FITCH ARCHITECTURE  
& COMMUNITY DESIGN  
home • community • planet

110 Pulpit Hill Road  
Amherst, MA 01002, USA  
413-549-5799  
www.facdarchitects.com



ESTABLISHED COHOUSING &  
SUSTAINABLE DESIGN PIONEERS  
WITH A PROVEN PARTICIPATORY PROCESS




Photos by Chris Roth

# The Year that Changed Everything

This issue describes how communities and communitarians have dealt with the unexpected changes the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about on their group and personal lives. These are tales of hardship, adaptation, inconvenience, dedication, distress, appreciation, and often a firmer grounding than ever in the choice to live in community and/or to prioritize “community” in one’s life. Nothing rivals “systems failure” to test resilience in the face of challenges, to verify the viability or ultimate futility of various human strategies to cope with an ever-evolving world, to help us develop skills and structures and wisdom we may not have possessed before, to discover what is necessary to survive into an unknown future long enough for flourishing to become possible once again, even if it doesn’t seem to be now.

I find it useful to reflect on my own year. Pre-pandemic, early 2020, I was leading a fulfilling life at Lost Valley, volunteering in the gardens, serving on Community Council and the Board of Directors (dealing with emotional/interpersonal well-being within the community, and financial/legal well-being within the organization, respectively), and appreciating the ongoing evolution of our growing community. I also volunteered four days a week in the elementary grades at a Waldorf-based public school in nearby Eugene, and was actively engaged with an ex-Lost Valley family whose children now attended that school, helping shuttle to play dates, initiating frisbee games, having outdoor adventures, and getting familiar with their new community in Eugene, where I was a frequent guest. I was also staying in close touch with my family of origin, visiting my parents in Oberlin, Ohio multiple times a year for a few weeks at a time, often overlapping with my brother (now living in New Jersey) and his own family. And in the work sphere, I felt more engaged than ever before in stewarding and editing COMMUNITIES, shepherded to a new life with a new publisher by a team of us who were unwilling to abandon its readers and its mission—one which seemed even more timely and relevant than it had been before. I felt a stronger sense than ever of wider community, partly because of the hundreds of people who had rallied around the magazine when its existence was in question, and partly because my own life involved so many different circles of community whose importance to me had become so obvious through the various tests they’d endured. 2020 looked to be a year that might be “better than ever,” despite the ongoing challenges facing the world in both social and ecological spheres. Together, I felt, we could confront them.



Cohousing provides the community we need to thrive while ensuring the privacy we enjoy.

CohoUS is a national non-profit. We link people with the resources they need to create and nurture cohousing communities while helping them connect and share with each other.

[www.cohousing.org](http://www.cohousing.org)

Join us for events offered this year as a part of our

**2021 Simple Series**

I had scheduled a return visit to Oberlin for the middle half of April. Especially as my parents grew older, I recognized what a grounding presence they have been for me throughout my life; the security I felt in my family-of-origin relationships established an underlying sense of safety in pursuing a quite unconventional path involving, paradoxically, a lot of uncertainty, voluntary challenge, and change. In particularly difficult times, especially during health setbacks and major transitions, family has been a healing refuge for me, providing time and space to reconnect with what underlies my life path, to find rejuvenation and new energy to follow the next branches of that path, to reaffirm family relationships that have been—along with my relationship with the world as a whole and my experience of myself—the one constant from my earliest point of memory. In some ways, my adult life has been a series of explorations of new worlds (including the world of intentional community, where I’ve made my home for decades now), while family has remained my “home base” and/or “home-away-from-home” where I return to as a stopover during segments of those adventures and projects or in transitions between different ones. My family of origin has even joined me in some of these explorations, the spheres of our lives interwoven in exciting and mutually enriching ways.

Much seemed well in this picture; then the pandemic hit. Air travel quickly appeared perilous, especially for visiting parents in a vulnerable age group. We decided to postpone the visit until the pandemic had abated a bit, likely in a couple months; meanwhile, we would stay in touch more frequently by phone and/or Facetime. School soon shut down as well, and Lost Valley enacted protocols about visits on- and off-site, meaning that, for a spell at least, I could no longer volunteer at the school nor even see my “adoptive family” and their friends and community in Eugene. Other residents were also forced by

circumstance to stay at home more, with the result that community life flourished, despite additional protocols that had us less physically connected as people while simultaneously more physically engaged with sanitizing solutions. With fewer outside distractions, attendance at garden parties and community meetings skyrocketed. With all community children (including some newly-arrived ones) stuck at home with no school, the “child scene” flourished as well, as did opportunities to spend time with them. Instead of commuting to town to volunteer at the school, then taking bike rides into the woods for exercise every evening once home, I found myself jumping on the Lost Valley trampoline for hours every day with three- to nine-year-olds who were eager for adult attention and interaction. It seemed an OK trade-off, given this new reality.

I heard stories from people in town and from friends in other parts of the country, *not* living in community, and read news reports too. I realized that we at Lost Valley were remarkably unimpacted during this time compared with average Americans; in terms of meeting both our basic physical needs and our social needs, we had most of what we could want right there within the community. If anything, we appreciated our lives there more than we had before. “I wish this weren’t going on, and I still miss much of my normal life, but if this pandemic needs to be happening, at least this is probably the best place to be while it is,” I frequently thought during those weeks.

Yet things changed again for me in early April. Absent the ability to be together in person, my parents and I visited via FaceTime on my Mother’s birthday, March 30, and again six days later—calls I still remember for how happy they were, amidst all the difficult circumstances. I snapped some Facetime photos, which are the last records I have of the reality “before everything [else] changed.”

Two days after that last call, I received notice that my Mother





was on the way to the hospital. She'd had a stroke, and two days later, in the hospital, she had another stroke. Two days after that, she returned home to hospice care, where my brother was able to drive from New Jersey to meet her. I kept abreast of developments via phone and FaceTime, but felt largely powerless, as air travel was still no safer and the prospect of infecting my parents because I wanted to be there put a stop to my fantasies of jetting out there right away. People sometimes survive up to four years on hospice care; I decided to "wait and see."

Meanwhile, connections in community, especially through trampoline jumping (starting on day two—I was too upset on the first day after the stroke to be able to do it), were what got me through this incredibly difficult time emotionally. My Mother was quite literally my longest-enduring human relationship in the physical world, and I had always felt connections and resonance with her far beyond that simple, frequent physical presence in each other's lives. I could not imagine the world without her in it. But around me at Lost Valley, in the meadow in springtime, and especially when surrounded by children, I could see that life doesn't only decline and end, but that it springs forth anew, that it regenerates, that the spirit embodied by my Mother could come forth in many forms, and that the best thing I could do, when it was physically impossible to be with her, would be to engage with that young life in ways that contributed to its unfoldment, that celebrated what we have, rather than being paralyzed by the prospect of loss, by doing what she herself would have done at that moment, if she had had the opportunity: giving attention to children.

Two weeks into her hospice care, I received a message from my brother: her health had taken a turn for the worse. The potential consequences of my staying put—my Mother and me never seeing each other in person again—clearly now outweighed the potential risks of my traveling to be with her. My flights the following day turned out to be on planes with perhaps a dozen socially-distanced passengers each, through airports populated mostly by cleaning crews. Flying at that time was probably safer than going shopping. I was able to spend my Mother's final two weeks of life with her—weeks I would not have traded for anything.

Six months later, I am still here in Oberlin, both to help my Dad cope with life in a now-otherwise-empty house and to help myself cope with this loss. My Mother left a rich legacy of books, writings, items that were important to her, relationships, influences on people in the local community and wider community. I have been finding homes for her books and her

vestments; I have been tapping into parts of the local and wider communities she was part of, and now volunteer two days a week at an organic farm/camp/retreat/education center, just an 11-mile bike ride away, which is the best substitute I've found so far for being on Lost Valley's 87 acres of meadow and woods, transected by a creek (Bellwether Farm is 137 acres, also fields and woods, bordered on three sides by a river). Although because of the pandemic shutdown it has far fewer people on a typical day than Lost Valley does right now, it still meets some of my social needs. I've been solar cooking in the back yard, and am enrolled in an online Chinuk Wawa course through Lane Community College, learning the Pacific Northwest Native American trade language while also continuing to cultivate my connections with that landscape and its peoples even though I'm more than 2000 miles away.

When I was there, Lost Valley seemed like "the best place to be right now." At a distance, as I lead a more solitary life with far fewer people in it (but with very close connections to a couple of them), I do not always see it in that light. From here, I cannot engage face-to-face with my community-mates, cannot absorb the exuberance of the children, cannot experience the healing to be had simply by being on the land there, cannot immerse myself in a garden party or in conversations that seem to be uncovering basic truths within community life, cannot be part of responding to various circumstances that need attention.

Instead, I am left to read campus emails. An inordinate amount of them have featured photos of two of our community kitchens, left "trashed" by users who are still not cleaning up after themselves. Others have alerted residents about lice outbreaks, or, most recently, a scabies outbreak, including extensive steps that everyone must take in order to treat/prevent them. For several weeks, emails described the unbreatable air in Oregon during this particularly bad wildfire season, necessitating evacuation by many. Other messages concerned apparent violations of COVID-19 protocols, or came from people whose skepticism about science can seem dangerous or even potentially lethal to me, depending on how many people buy into their viewpoints. Then there are notices about gatherings I would not be interested in attending even if I were present (gender-exclusive groups, saunas in a time of contagion, loud dance parties), followed by others about gatherings I *would* be interested in attending but, frustratingly, can't.

In almost every case, these emails do not speak to my heart or call me back, but contribute to my feeling of separateness. They help me make peace with the circumstantial necessity I

see anyway of being here right now, rather than there—prioritizing for the moment lifelong family connections over an ever-evolving in-person intentional community adventure.

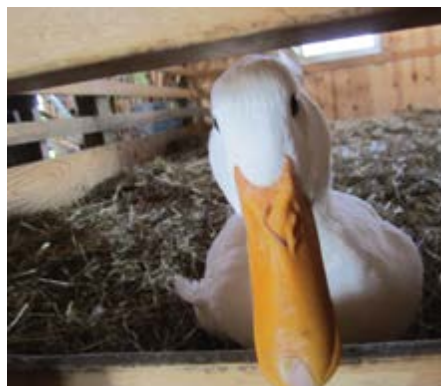
Sometimes an electronic communication will shatter this story: several emails shared photos of a barred owl that has been perching on branches just feet from outdoor meetings, and who seems totally at ease with close proximity to the human community there. My Zoom meetings with Lost Valley Board members, often involving other community members as well, remind me of my connections to so many people on site and to the land, and how enriching the arrival of new residents can be as well. If everything hadn't changed, part of me recognizes, I never would have left, and I would likely be appreciating life there too, unbothered by emailed photos of dirty dishes and sinks and feeling less annoyed or alarmed by the occasional science denier whose opinions are fortunately not holding sway in the community at large.

Here, away from my community, I recognize that in order to justify and be at peace with my own circumstances, and the choices I feel I need to be making right now, I am far more susceptible to judgment of the path not currently taken, far more easily distressed by challenges within community that I know would seem much easier to deal with were I there. I'm much more prone to see myself as inherently a loner, someone who almost prefers to not be around people. In retrospect, before I ever lived in community, I would have seen and described myself in much the same way, with no firm reasons to doubt that conclusion; and without major shakeups in my life that led me to community, I might still be telling myself that anti-community story. I believe that many within our culture have that same feeling about intentional community and their ability to adapt to it or thrive in it, based either on no experience or on initial unsatisfactory experience. Perhaps the changes introduced by the pandemic will be analogous to the shakeups that led me to community many decades ago, which helped me see that the ideas and attitudes I'd sometimes had about taking any paths other than the one I was on were in fact quite inaccurate and counterproductive, a product of fear and self-justification rather than a heeding of deeper callings and inherent nature.

Finally, I recognize that I have much more to write about in relation to my Mother. Loss is more real to me this year than it's ever been. Even a minor loss—like the disappearance of an email that a COMMUNITIES reader sent me, expressing condolences about my Mother's death (perhaps that person will read these words, and resend that email?)—can set off these feelings of more major loss.

Nevertheless, as with every previous edition of COMMUNITIES, I feel enlivened and rejuvenated by the process of putting this issue together. I find it immensely gratifying to be engaging with people in varied circumstances, all of whom have valuable stories to tell, and to help them share their stories. Storytelling is what we were made for, I believe—essential to us as a species, even crucial to our survival. Our next issue will explore that theme much further. Thank you again for joining us. 🐦

*Chris Roth edits COMMUNITIES. To learn more about his Mother, please see [gen-us.net/](http://gen-us.net/) Nancy Roth.*



## Subscriptions, Gift Subscriptions, and "Pay It Forward" Subscriptions

Here is our pricing structure, designed to encourage wider distribution of COMMUNITIES and to facilitate giving, sharing, and supporting the magazine:

### PRINT SUBSCRIPTIONS:

- **First subscription:** \$30 per year in US, \$40 per year outside of US
- **Additional (gift or "pay it forward"\*) print subscriptions in US:** \$25 per year. Additional international subscriptions: \$35 per address.
- \*"Pay it forward" subscriptions are gift subscriptions with no specified recipients, allowing us to respond to requests to send the magazine to individuals and groups without adequate funds to pay for it.
- **Bonus:** every print subscription also includes access to all digital back issues and a current digital subscription.

### DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTIONS:

- **First subscription:** \$20 per year (digital, anywhere in world)
- **Additional (gift or "pay it forward"\*) digital subscriptions:** \$15 per year.
- \*"Pay it forward" subscriptions are gift subscriptions with no specified recipients, allowing us to respond to requests to send the magazine to individuals and groups without adequate funds to pay for it.
- **Bonus:** every digital subscription also includes access to all digital back issues.

### DONATIONS FOR RELAUNCH EXPENSES:

We also appreciate **tax-deductible donations** to help us cover the costs of relaunching the magazine and improving its accessibility and outreach. Subscriptions alone do not generate enough revenue to publish this (or almost any) magazine. We exist because of the generosity of those who can afford to pay more and who believe in our project.

Please visit [GEN-US.NET/COMMUNITIES](http://GEN-US.NET/COMMUNITIES) to subscribe, order, or donate to COMMUNITIES. Or you can mail a check or money order (payable to COMMUNITIES Magazine) with your subscription orders and/or donation to:

Attn.: **Linda Joseph/COMMUNITIES**  
64001 County Road DD  
Moffat, CO 81143 USA

(A form for tax-deductible donations is downloadable at [gen-us.net/donate/magazine](http://gen-us.net/donate/magazine).)

Feel free to contact us with any questions at [communities@gen-us.net](mailto:communities@gen-us.net).

**Thank you for  
being a supporter of  
COMMUNITIES!**

# We Still Have Toilet Paper: COVID-19 Pandemic Response at Twin Oaks Community

By Stephan Nashoba

When I signed up to be on the Twin Oaks Health Team (HTM) last fall, I was picturing one fairly quick meeting per week in which we mostly approved small-to-medium-sized expenditures and monitored budgets. I had no idea that I'd end up doing 15-20 hours of health-related work per week making stressful, ad hoc, time-crunched decisions on a community-wide scale. So how did we get here (as of my time of writing, September 2020) and how does pandemic response work in a community of ~80 people?

## The Beginning: Covid Creeps Closer

At first, the threat of Covid seemed far away. It was a cultural meme worthy of jokes and internal parties in which people drank Corona beer and played the board game "Pandemic" while listening to curated playlists including songs like "Dancing by Myself" and "You Give Me Fever." It wasn't until February 29th when we posted our first COVID-19-related note on our 3x5 board encouraging folks to pay closer attention to handwashing hygiene, and it still seemed a little premature (although always a good idea to encourage communards to up their handwashing game!).

We were fortunate that the Planners (our highest governing body responsible for community-wide decisions) in 2009 wrote up a "Flu Pandemic Response Plan" that was essential in helping us start the conversations about what options we should be looking at. It included things like when to shut down various off-the-farm services, possible locations for isolating sick folks, etc. While this policy didn't solve all of our problems, given the

differences between this virus and the flu, it was useful to not have to totally reinvent the wheel, and provided guidance on appropriate levels of response as the threat increased. As we started monitoring the Virginia Department of Health's COVID-19 data and saw the number of cases get closer and closer, the overall atmosphere changed rapidly from feeling ahead of the game to scrambling to keep the virus out.

## Do Panic!: Total Lockdown

We started instituting a community-wide full lockdown on March 15th with the HTM and the Planners joining together as the pandemic response team to make the first several ad hoc decisions swiftly. One of the first changes had to do with who was allowed to be on the farm during this crisis.

Unfortunately, we had a group of visitors here doing their final week of the visitor

*Self-quarantine signs at all entrances.*



McCune Porter

period while this was all unfolding. Normally we require folks to go away for a month while we complete their input process and in order to give them a chance to reflect, think deeply, and tie up loose ends before returning. However, the Community Membership Team (CMT) felt it would be unethical to send people out into the world while there were so many unknowns, so we waived their month-away requirement and allowed people to stay during their membership input process. We also eliminated the three-month maximum limit on longterm guesting for a handful of guests who were here.

However, we also got tighter on who we would allow on the farm. There was a particularly problematic visitor who was clearly not going to be accepted for membership, so we asked co to leave. There were a few members and well-known guests off-the-farm who were in the midst of trying to return so we ended up having them complete a two-week quarantine at a nearby location prior to coming back. During this time, we also put out a paper and community survey about how tight we wanted to be about allowing new folks onto the farm after the initial few returners “Indiana Jones-ed” their way back in as we were shutting down. The majority of folks were in favor of having folks with right of return (current members, people on personal affairs leave, etc.) and well-known guests (after a 10-day input period). We wouldn’t be accepting anyone we don’t know onto the farm to guest and everyone would need to do a two-week quarantine prior.

Another big change is that we suspended town trips and instructed everyone to order what they could online and do without if they couldn’t. This was very easy for some people and very difficult for others. It was frustrating being in a bureaucratic position where we were trying to keep the whole community safe from a virulent plague while people were whining about not getting their fancy cheese and booze, but I recognize it was also very trying for people to suddenly be stuck on the farm in close quarters while the world was potentially ending and they didn’t have easy access to their coping mechanisms.

We also implemented a strict protocol for incoming items, such as mail delivery and groceries, which involved either waiting (24 hours for cardboard/paper and three days for plastic/metal) or thoroughly sanitizing (bleach or alcohol, wetting for five minutes). For the first few months we also were paying a nearby friend of community who was willing to do shopping trips for us. However, we recently switched over to doing our own contactless pickups and still try to get others outside our quarantine to do occasional trips involving going into stores. We put up a mail tent in our driveway for mail and package drop-offs so that the mail carriers don’t need to come into the office to drop off items. We then had a designated person move the mail to other locations for people to retrieve at the end of each day. This often meant that it took a bit longer than expected to get things delivered. Thankfully, one thing we never ran out of was toilet paper—yay for bulk buying via the commercial supply line!

## The Castle and the Moat: Protecting the Most Vulnerable

Within a few days of community-wide lockdown, we formed a quarantine-within-a-quarantine for our most vulnerable population. Twin Oaks has a building called Nashoba which was built primarily for elders and folks with more intense health-related needs, although it is generally a mixed-age and mixed-ability house. Most household members who were not high-risk moved out into other houses in the community and Nashoba went on full lockdown from the rest of the community. Food items were delivered to the airlock to sit for three days before entering and Nashobans cooked all their own meals and did as much labor as they could from inside the house. We created a job code called “qpro” which stood for “proactive quarantine” so that folks opting to prioritize their health were not penalized for not making quota since there were limits on how much work they could do from inside the house. However, most Nashobans still found lots of ways to contribute, such as relocating the hammock sales desk up to Nashoba office, doing portable hammocks work, indexing books, and sewing homemade fabric masks.

Total lockdown within Twin Oaks provided a mixed bag of pros and cons. Nashoba resident Eve says, “Cooking and sharing our evening meals was very important to me, being with my fellow house mates and reporting about our day

*The first COVID-19-related 3x5 on February 29th.*



Stephan Nashoba



## Exceptions: The Slow Crawl towards Opening Up

There's an exception to every rule and life in community is no different. While we didn't get much pushback on the decision to quarantine at first, people started asking for exceptions within a few weeks. The first exceptions were around medical trips. Most doctor offices canceled all non-urgent services anyway, so we did allow some folks to go to some medical appointments if they were important enough that the doctor was keeping the appointment. For these outings, we required people to follow precautions, such as wearing a mask and gloves, bringing and using hand sanitizer, staying 10 feet away from others as much as possible, touching as little as possible, sanitizing the vehicle upon return, and washing themselves and their clothing before returning to normal community life. As doctor offices began opening up to non-urgent medical appointments, we decided to allow these appointments also, since we didn't want people to forego preventative treatment and then end up in the ER instead. At this point, we're still not allowing indoor trips for other reasons

and any news events. Sewing masks for the community kept me busy and sane."

Nashoba opened back up within the community around June 6th, but Nashobans are still being cautious with restricting the building only to residents and partners of residents, requiring hand-washing for everyone upon entering the building, and having the possibility of closing back down as an option in case the outside situation worsens. Nashoba resident Tony says, "It was a welcome transition to experience life with a smaller group. I will admit that I was happy to enter a more liberal version of the strict quarantine, but it's still true that we are being extra careful, living essentially isolated from the outside, minus some deliveries. I think it's not as difficult for some, and I definitely understand the importance of being extra vigilant because as a community of members living and interacting so closely, any introduction and spread of the virus would be especially impactful for our businesses and living arrangements. Still, few will be happier than I will be when we are less confined."

without HTM/Planner approval.

While people could always leave Twin Oaks, they would be subject to quarantine upon return so many people felt trapped. Once we got settled into our quarantine routine, we started getting requests for people to be able to visit family and friends in a way that wouldn't require a 14-day quarantine period camping at our conference site (the default place for returning quarantine since it has dedicated kitchen and restroom facilities). So, we came up with quarantine-to-quarantine (Q2Q), so if someone's family or friend could maintain a quarantine more strict than ours for two weeks, folks were allowed to go and come back with that counting as their quarantine period. We later realized that folks in the mainstream were also doing this type of thing and calling it "double bubble." We've now had several folks take advantage of this set-up and have also added our neighbor community Acorn to our permanent bubble (unless a breach occurs at either community). We're now looking into adding other nearby communities, neighbors, and friends of community as we work towards agreement on various protocols, primarily via a discord server (free online chat application) with representatives of each community.

## For Science!: Evidence-Based Protocols and a New Normal

While it was easy to trust health experts at the very beginning, it became harder and harder to decipher good science from Trump-pressured attempts to get folks back into the workforce as soon as possible, as well as the fact that this virus seems particularly tricky to get solid facts about. However, we are slowly modifying our protocols based on new evidence as we can confirm sources and make sure it stays sound prior to immediately trying it. For instance, there have been small studies since March indicating that surface transfer is fairly low-risk. However, we were suspicious of this at first since it seemed that it may likely be yet another ploy to get people out to spend money sooner than is wise. However, with more and more studies and anecdotal evidence, we've recently decided to loosen up our restrictions on items and focus mainly on distancing,



masks, and avoiding aerosol transmission. We're currently in the process of rewriting protocols in light of this "new" information.

We're also rolling out protocols around off-the-farm outdoor recreation and distance visiting in order to allow a higher degree of freedom of travel for some much-needed time and space away from the community once in a while (with the knowledge that if any protocol "breaches" occur, a 14-day quarantine may be necessary upon return). With the increase in car usage due to regular contactless town trips and personal travel, we've gone back to daily vehicle assigning which seems like a step on the path towards a sustainable level of longterm quarantine life.

### Lessons Learned?

We're still in the middle of this thing, so it might be a bit too early to learn much, but there are a few things that I've been thinking about lately when reflecting on how we've been handling this.

One thing that has really come to the forefront is our reliance on capitalism, despite our stated intentions for being a self-reliant community. It was really a task trying to find new ways to source bulk food items and health supplies at the beginning. We focused a lot at the beginning of the pandemic on doing more for ourselves. Now that more reliable contactless shopping trips are happening, I can unfortunately feel the community moving away from this temporary excitement about more self-sufficiency, but perhaps some of it will remain.

Another issue that has come up is how difficult it is to provide rural mental health services. Everyone is having very different emotional responses to the pandemic, all the way from some being quite content to never leave the farm ever again and eat only home-grown veggies to some who rely on frequent outings and store snacks in order to cope with living in such close quarters to so many people. It has been good to see the community loosen up on some policies in order to make life easier for people, but it has also been fraught with judgments and worries of doing too much caretaking of individuals.

Another issue that came to the forefront is our decision-making strategies. It was surprisingly easy for the HTM/Planners to make a huge unilateral decision without much pushback when we decided to shut down off-the-farm travel in response to the pandemic getting closer. However, at some point we had to go back to a system with more community buy-in as we came up on the prospect of quarantine life lasting many months, if not years. It's still a struggle to determine which changes have enough community-wide support since many people are too focused on their individual struggles during this time to comment on papers or come to meetings. However, we now have kept up a system of weekly meetings since the pandemic started, which seems to be a positive shift in our highly writing-based culture. Currently, pandemic response and other community issues happen every other week, in between biweekly racial justice meetings (for more information about the long overdue racial justice work happening at Twin Oaks, check out our website and Facebook pages).

Nashoba resident Flinch summed up the whole quarantine situation by saying, "Even though our community is not off-grid or self-sufficient, our large and diverse infrastructure has made it easier for us to stay largely quarantined from the world outside our borders for a long period of time, keeping us so far apparently safe from the virus. This feels like a huge benefit of

organized communal living on a large piece of private rural property! Another great benefit is the natural space, the woods and fields, for exercise or moments of retreat and relaxation, either by oneself or with company. Still, dealing emotionally with this sort of group quarantine has felt mixed. Living with over 70 members one doesn't feel so isolated, and that has felt healthier. However, just trying to make group decisions about the quarantines within the community could sometimes be as contentious and divisive as any other issue could be!"

Overall, crisis situations like this are full of contradictions. We face both challenges and opportunities. We see both the worst and the best in people. We feel both cabin fever and cozy togetherness. There's both division and solidarity. We have both scarcity and abundance. It's a reminder that living in community is both messy and complicated, but also beautiful and necessary for survival. 🌿

---

*Stephan Nashoba has lived at Twin Oaks Community for about six and a half years. In addition to being on the Health Team, co also manages Equipment Maintenance, Taxes, Archives, and Twin Oaks Queer Gathering. Co also enjoys blacksmithing, rock climbing, DJing dance parties, being read to, and consuming a variety of potato products.*



McCune Porter

# Gifts of the Pandemic: Voices from Glenora Farm Community

*By Alicia, Benjamin, Lisa, Veronika, Adola McWilliam, and Lucinde Metcalfe*



**G**lenora Farm is one of the two Camphill Communities in British Columbia, Canada. Glenora Farm is a life-sharing community, where adults with developmental disabilities live, work, and learn together with their caregivers. It is a fairly small community surrounded by beautiful forests and friendly fields, with just a couple of houses and a few dozen people. One of the houses is called Helios house. Currently, there are four Companions (adults with special needs) living in Helios house, together with one Coworker and two House Coordinators who have two children. Some of them decided to share how they perceived the coronavirus pandemic, with all that came with it—as did Adola, a Founding Member of Glenora Farm.

## **Alicia (Companion):**

When we first heard that the COVID-19 coronavirus was discovered, I was in denial and didn't really believe it existed. I remember laughing to myself and rolling my eyes every time I heard the

words “coronavirus,” or “COVID-19.” However, when it spread to Vancouver Island, I realized it was real and it affected me and Glenora Farm, in a way where I felt alone and a bit scared.

We were cut off from the world, and had to follow sanitation rules. I felt slightly frustrated, because plans were made that I was looking forward to, and were canceled last minute. For example, I was planning to go to Vancouver with a small group for a conference, and was almost about to pack my bag, but my friend told me it was canceled. My qigong grand master was about to come for his annual visit, but he couldn't make it either due to the virus. Our choir was preparing for our concert, but we had to cancel. Also, I was planning to go see a movie in the theatre with some friends, and the movie theatre first delayed the release of our selected movie, then the whole establishment closed.

But I soon learned to adjust and cope. I grew used to washing my hands, sanitizing everything, and drinking vitamin C drink. I now enjoy being outside every day, however I still miss making candles and baking in the cafe. Now that the restrictions are slowly lifting, I feel relieved and anxious at the same time. I feel like my life before Covid is slowly returning to normal. However, I also still hear of updates on the virus, and imagine the restrictions being set again and returning to full isolation.

## **Benjamin (son of a House Coordinator, 10 years old):**

Before I moved to Glenora Farm community in Canada, I lived in a small town in Central Europe. I would like to tell you why I am happy that I was here on Glenora Farm during the coronavirus pandemic.

In our town I would not be able to go outside or play with my friends. I would not be able to ride my bike around whenever I want. I would be inside all the time. I would not see anyone, I would not meet anyone. I would be able to be only with my closest family. I know I would feel a bit lonely and sad. I would have a lot of energy and nowhere to

use it up. Living on Glenora Farm, I always have a lot of people around me. I am glad I can be with them and I do not have to keep away from them, and even though Covid is around us, we can still do things, go for walks, and have fun together.

It is nice to be surrounded by nature right now, away from the people, because there is a very small chance you will get sick when you live in the countryside. If I still lived in my hometown, I would need to wear a mask all the time and there would still be the risk of us getting sick. Here, we have better air, we get healthier in the sun, we move a lot, we eat good food, and all this is helping us to stay healthy.

If we were in our town, my parents would be out of a job. We would have little money after some time and it would be hard for us to buy basic things. Both my parents are private teachers, so they go to people's houses and to companies, or the students come to them. They would not be able to do that during the Covid pandemic. At Glenora Farm, we do not need to worry, because we are still supported by the community and we needn't be afraid that we will not have enough food or a place to live.

Back in my country, people would probably tell us all the time how dangerous the virus is and that we should be afraid of it. They would keep telling us what we should do and should not do. The people would be unpleasant, because they would be scared and they would not really want to talk to me in case I have Covid. I noticed that people around here are still friendly, kind, and they talk to us nicely while following all the Covid rules. They still help, stop to chat a little, and it feels like they are not afraid of Covid at all. And that is good, because then I do not feel so afraid.

### Lisa (Companion):

I wasn't sure at first if I should believe about COVID-19 as it seemed like just a bad flu, on the other hand my mother watches the news daily and informed me regularly about what was happening in the world. Covid stopped me from enjoying Special Olympics as I coach Bowling, it stopped me from going out on regular town trips, it's stopped me from going on outings with my friends that I live with, it's stopped me from participating in a local choir, and it's stopped me from visiting my family and friends who live outside the community.

However on the plus side it's made me appreciate that I can still get out and about, as instead of regular town trips (weekly) I can go for walks in nature, and now that things are starting to look up I can go on outings, sometimes town trips, I had choir meetings online, so despite everything there's a good side.

### Veronika (House Coordinator):

Isolation is generally perceived as a negative word. It was not different with the isolation that was thrust upon the world because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It took people by surprise, they felt cheated, scared, and uncomfortable. The changes were felt in our community as well: no trips to cafes, no Special Olympics, no visits to parents, no outings. But you know, I liked it! I loved the isolation and did not mind it at all. It was a dream come true for me and I think it was the best thing that could have happened at the best possible time.

I realize I might be in the minority, but I really appreciated that I was, for a short time, safe from unexpected visitors dropping by; the threat of all the obligations connected to the outside world was suddenly gone; I had a watertight excuse for not going shopping; I did not have to feel pressured to attend a talk, conference, or a presentation I am not interested in, because there were none.

At the same time, I finally had as much time for the Companions and Coworkers in our house as I wanted. The community stands and falls on relationships, but it is impossible to build and maintain good and healthy relationship with eight other people, when you are on the run from dawn to dusk, with barely any time to at least pretend you are interested in



Photos courtesy of Lucinde Metcalf

the people you share your home with. And I do care about them deeply...and it was killing me that I was often too tired or too busy to show it the way they needed it.

Moreover, the COVID-19-related isolation brought with it some restrictions and changes, the most radical of them being the transition from inside-plus-outside workshops to only outside workshops. Imagine that! Spring was coming and the whole community was forced to work outside, in the gardens and on the farm, just when it was needed the most. It would be a horrible lie if I said that everyone enjoyed it. Quite the opposite—some people hated it and many complained! But gradually, they came to appreciate it, got used to it, and even started feeling proud of what they were doing.

Isolation might be perceived as a negative concept. To me, in this case, it brought a sense of safety, togetherness, and offered an opportunity to be who I really am and to do things I consider important. It made my life easier, truer, and, in a way, more cheerful.

### **Adola McWilliam (Founding Member of Glenora Farm, working in Camphill Communities for nearly 70 years):**

For us, living in Community with developmentally challenged adults, the time of isolation was actually a wonderful experience. The Handidart bus that normally brought people living in the area to attend our day program was no longer able to come, and the office staff from the “outside world” were all working from home. In our community no visitors were allowed, and only one designated person from each house was allowed to go shopping once a week. Our craft workshops were closed (weaving, felting, candle making) and all the volunteers and companions in care joined the outside work groups in the garden, farm, forest, or doing estate work. Under the enthusiastic guidance of our gardener, farmer, and estate leader, our property received a wonderful, much-needed facelift. From the gardens that feed the community and the landscaping around the houses to our sadly neglected parking area, care was given and much hard work was done, and now we enjoy the added beauty surrounding us and can even park our cars in a beautiful spot.

We have nearly 100 acres to work and move around in as

well as free access to a neighbour’s property, so we never had to be confined like others in cities. We could breathe and move freely and could enjoy each other’s company in the fresh outdoors. We kept our houses clean and followed all the sanitizing measures to keep us safe, and tried to convey the idea of “social distancing” to our companions, which proved close to impossible for most of them. Many of them need help with washing and dressing, and physical contact is unavoidable. We needed to consider ourselves as being in one big, protected bubble and so our feeling of community and care for one another intensified and we became stronger as a group.

What we missed the most during this period was access to the ocean, and one Sunday a group decided to drive to where they could walk on a beach. By then most of the parks were closed and we ended up driving all the way to Victoria and having a very nice picnic in Beacon Hill Park with a view across the straits. Other people were concerned that we were together in such a large group, but we needed to stay together to maintain our bubble and to keep the companions at a safe distance from others.

We began to realize how the surrounding natural world was beginning to breathe more freely and how unbelievably beautiful the Spring was and how peaceful life had become. We were able to relate to each other as humans in a new way as well as to the part of nature that was our responsibility. COVID-19 was hard on humans but gave the plant, insect, and animal world a chance to recover from the suffering we have caused them. When things return to “normal,” we hope to keep some of the lessons we have learned. 🐦

---

*Located in Duncan, British Columbia, Canada, Glenora Farm is a residential community for adults with special needs and their caregivers. From their website: “It is our endeavor to create an environment in which those who are in need of special care, and those who provide it, can relate to each other as companions, rather than as professionals and clients.... In the way we live together, in the way we care for the land and in the things we make, we intend to uphold the ideals of Camphill, in which each contributes what he or she is able to, and receives in turn what he or she needs.” Find out more at [glenorafarm.org](http://glenorafarm.org).*



# THE RAINBOW GATHERING AND COVID-19: How a physically dispersed anarchist community addressed the pandemic

By Karin Zirk

The 2020 Annual Rainbow Gathering began at vision council on-the-land in July 2019 outside of Iron River in northern Wisconsin and reached consensus to gather in the National Forests of Idaho. We scheduled fall council, which is when plans and discussions begin to create a truly positive gathering the following summer. A few people met with indigenous tribes in the area to address concerns. Early spring is usually the time for increased discussions: Facebook would have been abuzz with plans for scouting for a specific site to gather, taking time off work, arranging travel plans. The various groups of regulars (called “camps”) would have started gathering their resources to co-create their spaces. As always, we advertised “ignore all rumors of cancellation.”

Then COVID-19 hit and the world turned upside down.

The Rainbow Gathering is the earth’s largest anarchist community. Landless, it assembles in different National Forests every July to pray for world peace. Gatherers are doctors, lawyers, farmers, and teachers. Some are college students or traveling young adults who journey in search of adventure and community. Others are hobos who live a life outside mainstream society and find a temporary home at the gathering. For over 30 years, I have called the gathering my family and my home. Through years of traveling the US in a Volkswagen camper van as well as working in corporate America, by the time Memorial Day hits, all my thoughts are with the gathering, how to make it home if I am able, how to be part of creating a positive and healing experience for everyone. The gathering is a microcosm of the larger culture; the challenge has always been to balance individual rights with community needs.

The original “Rainbow Gathering” began in Granby, Colorado on July 1-4, 1972 and has since continued and spawned smaller regional gatherings in North America and gatherings on every continent except Antarctica. Each year 100 to 20,000 participants create a temporary village that provides food and medical care, shares ideas, philosophies, religions, and engages in ceremony, song, theater, drumming, and dancing. This is an experiment in community living and anarchist principals. The “raps” (writings compiling Rainbow guidelines and philosophy) hold our collective wisdom on everything from bringing kids to a gathering to cleaning up your camp at the end of a gathering, and share hard-won knowledge.

There are no “members” of the Rainbow Family or a Rainbow Gathering; one can only choose to participate or not. There are no formal leaders, but some participants have earned respect based on their actions in one critical moment or over a lifetime of gathering. Participation is the key. In other words, there are no official “shitter diggers” but there are people “digging shitters.”

Over the years, participants have communicated and shared ideas from Usenet and AOL to Facebook; however, we always held to the belief that community decisions be made on-the-land, not on the internet. For me and many others, being unplugged and in nature, meeting people face-to-face, and communicating with our entire bodies is

---

**For me and many others, being unplugged and in nature, meeting people face-to-face, and communicating with our entire bodies is the point.**

---

---

## The people who chose to gather felt very strongly about the importance of gatherings. As one person posted on Facebook, “I’m willing to die to pray for world peace.”

---

the point. Our lives begin to take on the rhythms of nature, we slow down, we listen to the heart beating under our bare feet, hear the sounds of leaves rustling in the wind, a mouse crawling through the woods. We let our hearts open.

The gathering culminates in the silent prayer for world peace on the morning of July 4th with drumming and dancing in the afternoon. Many gatherers call July 4th “Interdependence Day,” a day of thoughtful reflection, far from the boisterousness of fireworks and barbecues used to celebrate the USA.

Like so many communities around the world, we had to adapt and do it quickly.

As Novel from Nic@Nite Camp recalls, in late February people were chatting on Facebook about a planned regional gathering in New Mexico slated for mid-Spring. People were concerned about the emergence of COVID-19. They invited the focalizers of this region to join the chat to discuss if it was safe to gather. Eventually the focalizers agreed not to gather but Facebook discussions continued. People debated, argued, and shared ideas on how to gather safely during a pandemic. Many people remembered the Norovirus that swept through the gathering in Oregon in 2017 that numerous people contracted by hugs, sharing of joints, and other close contact activities. I myself had a good 15 hours of vomiting.

Eventually, someone set up a conference call number and discussions moved to the call on alternating nights. This call led to Nic@Nite putting out a statement encouraging people not to hold any regionals due to COVID-19. Many camps, kitchens, and individuals added their names and shared the information through social media, on blogs, via email, and other means.

Aaron Funk from Granola Funk Theater camp remembers the calls coming out of the Community Safety Discussion on Facebook where people shared ideas on how to gather safely during a pandemic including food safety and other protocols. He also pointed out that as the quarantine-at-home orders started to come out, the calls served as a check-in for gatherers.

Memes such as “Postpone Idaho to 2021” circulated in various forms on social media. One-on-one conversations took place via phone calls, text messages, emails, etc. The group calls continued sometimes with popcorn discussions where people freely talked and responded, other times with a more formal stack process where people provided a check-in and then were added to a list of speakers.

I remember early in the calls, our traveling family experiencing fear of catching and/or spreading the virus. People who made their living by selling handicrafts in towns where people congregate or at festivals that would normally happen around the country had no place to go. People who worked festivals doing stage work, selling jewelry, ticket taking, and/or other roles found many of their employment opportunities shut down.

While my grassroots environmental group in San Diego could easily transition to online meetings and make decisions, things are not so easy for the Rainbow Gathering. And while I miss in-person meetings in my daily life, meetings still happen in businesses, planning groups, city councils, etc. The transition has not been easy for anyone, but for a non-hierarchical group that only makes decisions on-the-land, the

challenges are enormous.

Since 1972, we have held true to our on-the-land process for decision making seated in a circle. Each person speaks then passes an object like a feather, rock, or stick to the person on their left. When a person puts forth a proposal and asks for “consensus by silence,” if the silence is not broken, consensus has been reached.

However, there is one other type of decision making that I call “consensus by foot.” This happens when the council is trying to reach a decision between going to potential gathering location “a” or “b.” At a certain point, if the majority of people want to go to “b” but a few holdouts want to go to “a,” the majority will just move to location “b.”

So, if you have to meet on the land, and you cannot do that without creating unsafe conditions in a pandemic, then what?

We experimented with facilitators for conference calls. A few gatherers tried to hold online Zoom workshops on issues like peace keeping, and scouting to try to educate less-experienced family. However, a digital divide exists between those who have access to computers and the internet and those who do not either by choice or by circumstance. Creative alternatives were tried such as the failed attempt to marry Zoom and our conference call number before everyone realized people can call into Zoom just like the conference call and could still participate.

As the shutdowns continued around the country, the conference calls began discussing the pros and cons of gathering. Longtime gatherer Jimmer joined the calls in June and what he remembers is arguments between pro-gatherers and anti-gatherers. And according to his math, 98 percent of the people did not attend the eventual gathering in Idaho.

By May the Om From Home movement started to take shape. People dedicated hours to crafting a message. As I recall, people wanted to discourage our family from creating and/or attending a gathering in Idaho for health and safety reasons while at the same not dictating to others what to do. We debated every word to send a strong but loving message that would not alienate family who disagreed.

Ultimately the statement became the website [www.omfromhome.org](http://www.omfromhome.org), which

kitchens, camps, and individuals endorsed. The URL was shared on social media, blogs, and via one-on-one communications. I heard from some people that they supported Om From Home, but would not publicly pledge their support due to concerns about the federal government and privacy issues. For example, no one foresaw that it would be used in this article.

Most of the major kitchens and camps signed on including important gathering-wide support systems such as Kid Village, Water Camp, which facilitates tapping springs and filtered water stations, and INFO, which helps people find resources at the gathering as well as hosts a lost and found.

Gary Stubbs noted that using “publicity and peer pressure to not gather” had a strong impact while Piper pointed out that having the Om From Home web list “helped reinforce the loving message of protecting others, and supporting our traditional prayer.” Tami suggested that “When we have [longtime] trusted kitchens spring postponement or oming from

home, I made up my mind not to go.” Tom (formally from CALM) shared, “I thought the Om from Home was a good idea. When it became ‘piss and moan’ from home it became irritating.”

I too supported the Om From Home movement. Simple things like handwashing become much more difficult in the woods when water has to be hauled and filtered and too many people don’t take the time to do the work of handwashing. What is the point of oming with my family if I cannot hold their hands and be in a circle, if I cannot share a community meal with the thousands of people I love and hope someday to know better? Occasionally I listened to the conference calls. Somehow without my family’s physical presence, my heart could not conjure up words to share, while staying home for this year’s gathering consumed as much emotional energy as actually attending a gathering. I, like many others, hungered to eat, sleep, and breathe with my family in the woods of Idaho. Without this gathering, I struggled with my true identity.

A small group of individuals insisted that we ignore all rumors of cancellation and continued our traditional processes of holding spring council, the gathering, and vision council as was their right. In general, finding a suitable site for a large gathering is a long process with work being done months, sometimes even years in advance. Individuals who have scouted for many years and who had found potential sites joined the Om From Home movement and decided not to share site information. This left those moving ahead with a gathering scrambling to find a site.

The people who chose to gather felt very strongly about the importance of gatherings. As one person posted on Facebook, “I’m willing to die to pray for world peace.” According to my sources, only a few hundred people attended the Idaho Gathering. Some were longtime gatherers, many were young people attending their first gathering, and others showed up because they felt safer in the woods than in the cities during a pandemic.



Courtesy of Karin Zirk

*Representatives of the Nimiipuu visited the gathering site (located within their traditional homeland) to ask people to relocate to the site of the 1982 gathering.*

---

## The conference calls and discussions are still taking place and harmony has not yet been realized. In fact, some supporters of the Idaho Gathering are perturbed that I am writing this article without having attended.

---

While some in the Om From Home movement felt our processes failed, Forest noted that “Processes didn’t fail, they worked pretty much exactly as we designed them.” While Rainy did not attend the gathering, she felt that “Folks willing to send PPE masks and gloves and to help out the clean up even though they didn’t attend the gathering were a big plus.”

Due to the remote locations of gatherings, communications between people on-the-land and in cities across the country is spotty at best. Many individuals stepped back from foundational work done in advance of a large gathering such as meeting with public health officials, indigenous tribes, and local communities in the gathering area because many of those individuals believed gathering was not the right course of action this year. As non-attendee Spice Straw said, “I wish there had been better communication so that those who did choose to gather would have had the guidance to avoid land that the natives use.”

As an attendee, Rick observed that “after mitigating safely in numerous places the past couple months I could do the same at the gathering... I did wear a mask when I was near people, I did wear gloves in the circle. I did nothing different than what I would do while shopping in a busy Walmart store at home” while Pippa “felt we were being fed alot of bullshit about the virus, meant to create fear and isolation in the masses.”

While I have not heard of anyone catching COVID-19 at this year’s gathering, it may be months before the full picture emerges due to the continued inter-family squabbles. However, the great reduction in number of people gathered undoubtedly went a long way to reducing the potential spread of disease. Many people who attended the Idaho 2020 gathering had their faith in the gathering renewed, met great people, and had a wonderful experience. I heard reports that some people at the gathering attempted to social distance but that created a more spread-out gathering, which ultimately caused what became the second big issue: the concerns of some local indigenous peoples.

Concerned Rainbow Family wrote, “I supported [om]...from home as did 95% of the participants of the 2020 rainbow family of living light gathering for world peace that took place in Riggins Idaho. Om from home was a great option for those who could not participate in person with the 49th annual RFFOLL [Rainbow Family of Living Light] in Idaho. But shame on you and others who declared war on the gathering tried to subvert the RFFOLL point of process. I hope you come to your senses and apologize.” Some people felt the process worked as intended and the gathering took place as intended. Other people felt the process was a complete failure.

In terms of successful processes, responses ranged from Randy Chase’s positive thoughts on “the part about ignoring rumors of cancellation,” while Novel offered a multi-faceted perspective: “I don’t think much went well about this, other than everyone getting into zoom meetings, conference calls, and other alternative means of staying connected.” Llama of Montana agreed and wrote that the alternatives “allowed More people Opportunity to attend, considering perceived Danger of Meet-

ing in person On The Land, which Was Used Against the Majority by a Minority to Push Bad Decision.”

Joy pointed out that “The solidarity made such a huge difference in the numbers and that was a success.” Daniel applauded “Getting agreement from majority of kitchens and participants not to attend.” “The 24/7 zoom as well as the every other night conference calls were superb in keeping communications open,” observed Susan. “The make-believe gathering on Facebook allowed us to share pictures and words supporting each other during this time.” A number of other people mentioned the “pretend we are at a rainbow gathering” Facebook page and brought humor into the mix. “I think we got it right,” noted Rebecca.

While many people enjoyed all the new connectivity tools, only a small subset of typical gathering attendees participated regularly. Much like myself, once committed to Om From Home, spending six or eight hours a night connecting with my family when I had to get up for work in the morning just was not feasible, although I did join in on some calls and mostly listened. Numerous people identified decision making on-the-land as an issue that was not necessary this year while others voiced recommendations that the 2021 vision council take pandemics and other disasters into consideration with the wording to provide future guidance.

Carla Newbre expressed concern about the misunderstanding “that simply because we don’t have hard and fast rules that it’s okay to do whatever you want. Somewhere, we have failed to educate much of our family; and or to imbue the value of personal responsibility to a wider community rather than only serving one’s own interests and personal agendas.” Others expressed similar concerns about the lack of sharing our core values. Relying on Facebook for communication was noted as a problem by many people—specifically, as Many Feathers pointed out, “the divisive social media format and algorithms which optimize sensationalism and clicks” used by Facebook contributed to our internal strife.

Rainy noted a number of shortcomings including “polarization and not listening. The polarization led to lack of



respect on both sides. We had no cultural sensitivity rap to refer to for protocols on dealing with indigenous nations or determining who is a representative of a tribe and who isn't.... Family needs to be more inclusive of the voices of folks of color and to evolve to 2020 thinking about cross-cultural relationships. People forgot how to listen to each other with open hearts and open minds. The smearing the character of the Nez Perce is something that never should have happened—we're better than that." Others expressed similar sentiments. Many supporters of attending the gathering felt it worked well. As Earth Mom put it, "Process? Nothing wrong with process, it was common sense of some that was lacking."

While our decision-making ability via conference call and various internet-based platforms was nonexistent, the process of sharing ideas within our family helped individuals make decisions. The online survey, which collected many responses for this article, was mentioned by a few people as a new process. Even more people mentioned the Om From Home website and the listing of individuals, camps, and kitchens that supported the movement to Om remotely as a great process to help drive individual decision making.

Tony Goodwater pointed out the value of a "renewed emphasis on local rainbow culture" and building circles in your area. Frost called out the importance to "affirm health and safety as baseline for any gathering" that many other people expressed. Carla valued the "quasi-councils by phone and FB chat and zoom.... They also served as an emotional safety net, which was the best thing about it."

A few people did not feel any new processes were created, and felt that no desire for change existed. A strong need was expressed to have people with experience in certain areas not on-the-land share more with those on-the-land. While pre-gathering online workshops or phone calls did take place this year, obviously not everyone knew about them or chose to participate.

The conference calls and discussions are still taking place and harmony has not yet been realized. In fact, some supporters of the gathering are perturbed that I am writing this article without having gone to the Idaho Gathering. There have been calls for a number of new raps, like cultural sensitivity raps on addressing indigenous peoples as well as calls for vision council to include language regarding pandemics and natural disasters so that alternative decision-making options are consented to upon the land. It is obvious that our education systems (skill shares) are not reaching the people who most want to learn.

I observed that many people who no longer attend gatherings due to health reasons were able to participate and share their perspectives via the calls and online meetings,

which created learning opportunities that would not have been as readily available on the land. Others expressed enthusiasm for all the options to stay connected.

As the Om is essential to our method of prayer, and as the Om is a vibrational sound, not feeling the vibrations working through our bodies was a huge loss when Oming From Home. Sound waves do not transmit in the same manner on a call as they do in person.

Moving forward into the future the vision council consensus seems to be the big issue on the table. Will the Postpone Idaho to 2021 vision win out or will the bulk of the family support going to New Mexico or Arizona? A lot of it depends I think on who is willing to go scouting and conversations that will take place over the next few months.

As 7Song notes, "Encouraging greater levels of respect, mindfulness & communication for and towards all others" is a path we are all on. I hope this year will have taught us individually and collectively how much we really love each other and how important this gathering is to all. Blessings to my family no matter our differences. 🌱

---

*Karin Zirk, Ph.D. is a mythologist and writer who is motivated by trying to understand the way the world works. An environmental activist in her spare time, she works in data management. Her recent novel, Falling From the Moon, is available at [FallingFromTheMoon.com](http://FallingFromTheMoon.com).*

Courtesy of Karin Zirk



*Author and friend "Circus" at a prior gathering.*



*The Rainbow Gathering in Idaho.*

Randy Chase



# Pandemic Practices

*By Meredith Owensby*

**A**t first glance, the particularities of pandemic life are awful for intentional community. You should not socialize unnecessarily. You should not sing together. You should stay six feet away from one another at all times. Your kids can't go to school and shouldn't hang out with other kids. If ever there were an argument to be made against intentional, high-density communal housing, this is it.

And yet, I would argue that our community's existence and practices have served to preserve joy and hope during this pandemic season. In fact, we even found ways to embrace new life rhythms together. I find myself grateful for being with the people I'm with and our ability to find joy and creativity amid so much uncertainty.

Let me tell you about how we've supported one another during this spring and summer.

Honna, our green-thumbed community member, focused her energy on improving the quality of our outdoor spaces. We have two yards between our two houses, two lots in need of some love. Honna managed to take what was weed-choked and neglected and transform it into a place of beauty. Now, on a morning walk of the labyrinth, I can bend down and pluck a strawberry, should I choose. The hammock looks out on the vibrant edible landscaping, and except for the lament of the perennial catmint (it doesn't even taste good!), we are well pleased with our catalpa-shaded patch of ground.

Honna also turned up the volume on her culinary pursuits. With the gift of a large instapot, Honna let her curry-cooking

abilities shine. We've had amazingly delicious dahl. We had paneer, an improvisation when we suddenly came into a large donation of soon-to-expire half-and-half. Honna began making kombucha, and the flavors she's tried (pineapple jalapeno! mango passionfruit!) have been well-received. And the bread baking! Did I mention the baguettes? I will not soon forget the Niçoise salad picnic where they featured.

Our in-house community organizer, Mary Ellen, managed to find ways to connect us to our neighbors during this socially distanced time. My favorite was her box fort competition. Tapping a local architect and an artist as "celebrity judges," families had from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on a Tuesday to construct the forts, using only tape, boxes, and paint. At 5, the judges circulated, and prizes of ice-cream-store gift cards were ultimately awarded to the best overall, most creative, and most structurally sound. From geodesic domes to sprawling castles, the resulting structures were highly impressive!

Mary Ellen also organized an evening of outdoor music. Two of our neighbor musicians paired up with their violin and keyboard for an evening performance. A neighbor with a large backyard offered to host. Families were able to come and keep their distance while occasionally offering requests to the duo. We even put on our best going-out clothes for the event. It felt special, the sort of thing we'd do even without a pandemic motivating us.

To facilitate adventures outside our geographic bubble, I channeled my "always on the lookout for the next interesting

cultural event” energy into the world of urban exploration. Using a book I’d obtained from the library just before the pandemic closure, I planned walking tours through different nearby neighborhoods. Since these tours were happening in the evening, I decided we would seek out sources of carry-out tacos, affordable to all of us, in each of the focus neighborhoods.

We’ve been on five of these taco tours to date, and putting our bodies into new places has been a real delight. We’ve quizzed residents of the neighborhoods on their taco recommendations as we’ve passed at a safe distance. We have joyously stumbled over soft-serve places for dessert. We have lightly trespassed to get a better view of a sunset. We have wandered into a nature preserve and marveled at the wildness waiting at the end of a nondescript street. For hours at a time, we’ve managed to forget about the pandemic, exclaiming instead over a turkey tail mushroom bigger than our outstretched hand.

Not every tour has been a success, however. Once we wandered far off course and found ourselves in an unfamiliar spot as night descended. However, the many people on their front porches happily directed us back toward the street where we’d left our car. There was also the low-lying park with the sign warning of possible sewage overflow after heavy rain. We learned the hard way this was not an idle warning. We all still look forward to the next outing regardless of all the mosquito bites and sunburns we’ve accumulated.

Early into the pandemic days, Mary Ellen encouraged us to create new activities and rhythms, rather than manufacturing pale imitations of the old. This advice has made us stretch in new ways while leaning into the reliable gifts we each possess. In the coming months we’re looking to do a book study on a book we’d all meant to read (*The Warmth of Other Suns*), facilitating an online prayer service for our friends at a distance using a mailed liturgical kit we’ve assembled, and trying out socially distanced educational opportunities for the kids in our community who are not attending school in person in the fall. These efforts are all new to us, and we’re looking forward to learning what we are capable of! 🌱

---

*Meridith Owensby is a cofounder of Lydia’s House ([stlydiashouse.org](http://stlydiashouse.org)), a Catholic Worker community in Cincinnati, Ohio. She is a doula, yoga teacher, recovering engineer, oblate, and liturgist. Her favorite phrase is “I know a good poem about that!”*



## Calculating a Pandemic

As the pandemic spread throughout our region, we found it difficult as a community to understand our level of risk. We’re a fairly small residential community, fewer than 15 people if everyone is present, and all of us are under the age of 40. Moreover, half of us are under the age of 10. Was there a way we could make decisions that were informed rather than alarmist or negligent?

Amidst all of the internet searching, we finally found an article with an equation that helped us get a sense of our risk level (see [marginalrevolution.com/marginalrevolution/2020/03/covid-19-event-risk-assessment-planner.html](http://marginalrevolution.com/marginalrevolution/2020/03/covid-19-event-risk-assessment-planner.html)). The equation that can calculate the likelihood that someone with coronavirus is present in a group of a given size is:

$$1-(1-c/p)^g$$

In this equation  $p$  is the population,  $c$  is the number of carriers, and  $g$  is the size of the group. We used our county for the  $p$  and  $c$  values, since we could obtain these numbers fairly easily.

I’m already anticipating complaints from data people who see the flaws in this method. “This assumes you have even community spread, which is not true. And it assumes you know the number of people in the county with the virus, which we don’t.” All of these things are true, but we were just aiming for a ballpark number of our risk, not numbers we could swear by. Additionally, we were still taking meaningful precautions (eating outside, regular temperature and symptom checks, having at least one community member tested every week), so we didn’t use the numbers to disregard responsibility.

For our particular community, we established a color-coded warning system: green if the risk was less than two percent that someone present had the virus, yellow if the possibility was between two and 10 percent, and red if the probability was 10 percent or higher. With each level of warning came additional social distancing implementations; that is, what was permissible on green was not permissible on yellow. Red had us almost all confined to our rooms, with all gatherings happening via technology.

Our numbers throughout July were typically in the <five percent range: that is, there was a less than five percent chance that someone in our midst had the virus, given the small size of our gatherings. This put us squarely in the “yellow” risk area, so we still gathered for meals but only if we could eat outside. Tracking the numbers from week to week helped us understand the ramifications of policy decisions at the state level, like the sudden, dramatic upward trend that happened after bars and restaurants reopened.

After we had been tracking numbers for a few months, the state started issuing color-coded warnings for each county every week. These risk levels were based not only on current infection numbers, but also hospital admissions, ICU bed occupancy, and non-congregate cases. Given the different data points, we felt these numbers were more comprehensive than our own. We happily began letting them do the math for us, while feeling smug about the fact we’d already employed a risk measurement system months ago.

—MO

# PULLED TOWARD AND AWAY: How C-19 Has Elevated the Attraction of ICs but Pulled Us onto Screens

By Colin Doyle

The ongoing pandemic seems to hold contradictory messages in it relative to intentional communities. On the one hand, many people who have had a one-day fantasy of starting or joining a community are now making the move to actualize it—the rumblings of societal uncertainty have gotten them off the fence. On the other hand, because interpersonal interaction is what spreads the novel coronavirus, much of humanity is getting deeper into the wired world of online connection, a paltry replacement for in-the-flesh community. It is dangerous to be together but unhealthy to be isolated. We are coming together more in person *and* less in person at the same time. Ah, the curious repercussions of COVID-19.

## Driven Together

For many years now I have been waiting for a time when the value of intentional community—choosing to live on a piece of land with peers who have similar values—finally becomes obvious to the majority of our society. It's only appealing for so long to climb the socioeconomic ladder, accumulate little-used possessions, grow none of one's own food, and have insufficient time to relax or enjoy dear ones. I've been waiting for the other shoe to drop, for the inevitable wobble of our society to open eyes to the value of intentional community as a permutation on traditional small-town life in the Old Country or East Coast hamlet or Mexican village—getting back toward something that worked in its time...in fact, for all of human history until just the last few generations. After all, the past is the future, so it's coming back around. But when?

Partly now. The long-term effects on society from COVID-19 (which I'll shorten to "C-19" to be both concise and precise) remain to be seen, but this ongoing rumble

seems to be knocking some people out of their complacency. Some move to intentional communities to make for a more secure life in an uncertain future. Others just want a higher quality of life now. *Where would you go if sh!t hit the fan?* Perhaps the local ecovillage or cool place you found on the web, where they look happy and grow some food.

A glorious confluence is that many people see ICs as both more prepared and resilient than the mainstream *and* a better place for daily life and raising a family. Kids can run around the gardens while adults grow edible insurance. This merging is bringing more residents to the community where I live, Meadowsong Ecovillage (usually referred to by its more familiar name, "Lost Valley"). In just over a year, I counted 17 people moving back to Lost Valley, previous residents from recent years coming back around. This is an unprecedented wave, far more than I've ever seen in my decade onsite. Add to this a dearth of people leaving the community: from mid-March when Lost Valley and the rest of the country got serious about C-19 until the end of August, only two residents moved out. This is also unprecedented in my time, a shockingly low rate of turnover in a community that typically has a fair amount. Residency climbed from 20-something in late winter to 70-something in late summer (many of them first-time residents in the community, adding to those living here before C-19 plus the aforementioned returners).

Is this all due to C-19? No. A staff push to increase residency levels started before March, with a lag time of one to three months. And many of the returned residents came back in summer/fall/winter 2019, before the coronavirus came on the scene. I think they are complementary movements. For example, what was



*Major wildfires in the Cascade Mountains made for poor visibility and even worse breathing. Dexter Reservoir.*

becoming a particularly warm and supportive community culture was accentuated by newfound insularity—with little travel and few event opportunities offsite, and with no people coming to the land for conferences, residents were left to entertain themselves more. Participation in most community activities spiked, to the ecstasy of the garden coordinator who had over 20 people at a garden work session (unheard of!). The community plenary had 34 participants one week, at a time when there were only 40+ residents; it stopped being limited to two hours, but ran longer to no complaint. Some residents were still occupied or otherwise employed just as they had been before C-19, but others had new time on their hands (while often receiving new government assistance, so they didn't need to pursue paid work, which had become scarce anyway), and the community flourished in a time of decreased distraction. Attraction brought people into the community and the good vibes kept them here. This focus did wane over time, partly due to C-19 fatigue and the pull to travel during a postcard Oregon summer. But still almost no one moved out.

A caveat is that C-19 caused major economic hardship for Lost Valley as an organization. Disrupted events income, a few extra expenses, and unsustainably low initial residency numbers made for a real financial cramp when C-19 first

heated up. This caused stress and buckling down, which the community took well. By summer there was a financial surplus, without even needing events (which typically happen most in the summer) or education programs (typically happening in the fall).

An added challenge was the need to develop new safety protocols to limit the spread of C-19 onsite. A series of ad hoc community meetings and standard plenaries in March resulted in a new set of rules around offsite travel, personal guests, social distancing within the community, etc. A revisit of all of it came up in July/August after standards relaxed and case numbers then elevated in the local area. The two waves of collective agreement generation were stressful for many residents, relatively slow in progress, and unprecedented. We persevered, but burned time and emotional energy in doing so, what you could think of as an insidious Covid tax.

Despite the noted challenges, C-19 has brought us together, at least in this community, and brought the future closer. “Someday” is starting to arrive. But a contrasting pattern also emerged from the pandemic.

### Driven Online

In a society (and increasingly world) based so much around the internet, that remote method of communication became the go-to when the coronavirus threatened. Instead of going to stores, people bought things on Amazon. Instead of school there was remote learning. Instead of yoga classes in studios, instructors streamed them online. This was generally an easy adjustment for wired adults, but it is contradictory to the thrust of intentional community. People have friends online, but I think many are one-dimensional relationships, like looking at an acquaintance's Facebook posts or following a niche celebrity on Instagram. Thanks to live video streaming technology, seeing a person's crying, smiling face in live detail is much more present than a simple phone call used to be—especially one on speaker phone—but doesn't allow for things like touch, and can be rudely interrupted by a wobbly internet connection.

Digital relationships are not what intentional community is about. It is about being together in the flesh, sharing our activities and lives: having meaningful conversation while weeding in the garden, lingering together along a path, sharing how we really are during a community forum, or halfway keeping an eye on someone else's toddler. These activities have been hampered somewhat at Lost Valley by C-19, but generally continue, and point to the higher quality of life here than in an isolated box in the outside society (see the first section above).

---

**Where would you go if sh!t hit the fan? Perhaps the local ecovillage or cool place you found on the web, where they look happy and grow some food.**

---



*During the 2019 Snowpocalypse, resident Anna Davis clears fallen trees from the sole access driveway.*

Photos by Colin Doyle

At Lost Valley the digital trend manifested predominantly around our monthly ecstatic dances. Instead of hosting 80-130 people in person, the first three dances after C-19 heated up were held online. No one drove in from the nearby city to share air with dozens of others. These dances received praise, but the bar was assumed to be lower, and they were far less juicy and connective than the real thing in person. We also had offsite Board directors call in to Board meetings instead of coming onto the property, and commonly experienced higher evening-time strain on the campus internet.

The automatic move to live more of our lives online is the wrong direction for the future, in my opinion. At the same time as community members appreciate their simple blessings more, their friends in a neighboring area or relatives back home are more atomized than ever, sadly separated. The spectrum is widening, and being in a frugal IC can feel like being one of the “haves,” as opposed to the “have-nots,” high-income people stuck in an apartment in Manhattan.

### Driven Snow

If C-19 is pushing the society further into an untenable digital existence, a recent regional rumble did the opposite. In February 2019 we experienced a snowstorm of enormous proportion for this area. Instead of the typical two inches of snow per year (my observed average), we received 19

inches of heavy snow in the span of a few days. Branches snapped and trees fell by the thousands. At Lost Valley the full campus was without grid power for three days, and part of the campus for three more. We gathered in places with wood stoves (or slept in separate units at 40 degrees). The community was casual but productive in its response, cutting trees out of the roadway, getting water from the cistern, and searching dusty shelves for candles. Things slowed down and got far simpler with no artificial light and no internet. Our nextdoor neighbor transformed from being an unknown proximate stranger to a chummy driveway-plower, showing the value of community outside the community.

Lessons from the “Snowpocalypse” were that independent energy is crucial, a food and water stash is key, and we should be prepared to rely on each other more than on utility companies and grocery stores. I found the message from this natural disaster very helpful, because it incentivized people in the region to move away from large infrastructural systems like the grid and internet, and more toward self-operated tools such as wood stoves for heat and tractors for work. It also invited stepping out of the atomized household model to cooperate with nearby folks in the same (snow-filled) boat.

Fire contrasting snow, the devastating blazes that raged through the West Coast in September 2020 drove people online, digging for fire information, evacuation zones, and smoke maps. During that scare (with a 100,000+ acre fire 15 wooded miles away from Lost Valley) I found the digital world to be essential, not for interpersonal connection but for anticipated fire direction and meteorological computer models, things we and our neighbors were ignorant of, sitting on the aforementioned tractor and staring at the soupy sky. Snow made the world bigger again temporarily, and fire made it really small.

The Snowpocalypse drove us off the internet, and C-19 (plus fire) drove us back on. Mixed messages from flake and virus/flame. This mixed message reflects the characteristics of our collective C-19 response: moving (back) to a community and staying there, or moving our life onto the internet. Moving *toward* each other and *away* from each other at the same time. In a sense it’s a choice—together in person on land, or relatively isolated in person plus somewhat together in a digital landscape. It will be interesting to look back in 50 years and see what the predominant choice of our society was, and how well it worked. 🍷

---

*Colin Doyle has lived at Meadowsong Ecovillage in Dexter, Oregon since 2010. He runs the Holistic Sustainability Semester at onsite Lost Valley Education and Event Center. He has lived on four continents and been to 40 countries total. He enjoys geography, uncommon languages, craggy mountains, and extremely long hikes.*



*Mandatory separation, even at rural recycling centers. Dexter, OR.*



*Shuttered playground in Eugene, OR during spring 2020 C-19 closures.*

# Glimpses of the Future

By See

“The City is coming, they’ll handle all that,” says Luke’s neighbor, standing with his hands on his hips, head cocked, a riot of colored lawn ornaments and whirligigs splayed out beyond him on his own cluttered front lawn.

“He needs the firewood,” Luke shrugs, indicating my partner in this task, who is standing ready to lift up part of Luke’s fallen maple tree so my chainsaw blade doesn’t get stuck in the compression of the two halves as I cut through.

I say nothing as I reposition my feet and check my escape routes in preparation for making another cut and adding to our growing pile, but I muse. There are the dangling power lines where the maple got hung up two days before after the “historic level winds” tore through Portland. The power was out for 18 hours. There are the brown, bare, but mowed lawns, some with Black Lives Matter signs, each a reminder of the protests and violence that have rocked downtown Portland each night for almost three months. Our neighbor, and the three of us, each sport a cloth mask, either dangling around our necks or across our mouths—the new reality of a life lived with COVID-19. When we stop for lunch, we carefully space ourselves out on Luke’s back porch, handing around take-out from the Teriyaki place down the road with arms fully extended to maximize the distance between us.

Hovering over us as we work is a yellow and brown cloud creeping through the Willamette Valley. Unbeknownst to me at the time, in the coming days, and for the next week, Portland will have the worst air quality in the world. Eyes burning and coughing up phlegm, I’ll flee the city for an overdue trip to visit a friend in grad school in Pocatello, Idaho.

The City is coming. To make sure we have electricity. To provide us water. To take away our waste. To rescue us from flood. To fix the road, fight the fire, clear the dangerous fallen trees. To keep our air clean. To govern, protect, care for.

I say nothing to Luke’s neighbor, but I think: “Not bloody likely!”

My story would be more impactful if the City took weeks to get to that tree, overwhelmed as they are by the multitude of crises facing Portland. In truth, they came seven days later—a full week after they said they’d return to clean up the mess and fix the power lines, but given the lack of urgency of the matter after the tree was pulled off of the power lines, not a long wait. The City came—this time.

I want to live in a world where I can rely on my government to provide for the life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness of the people. I’ve seen the alternative, looking down at drone footage of cratered-out buildings, brown-grey-clad people scurrying like ants, hunched over their bags and their AKs, trying to scratch out some kind of meaning in the dusty rubble as we watch them, invisible Gods that we are, weighing their fate without their knowledge. I would never playfully call for revolution or for Civil War. I know what crumpled lives look like, and I know that hitting the reset button on society produces conditions that are never better than what they replace. Not for decades.

---

**Those of us  
traveling and  
those of us who  
stay all wonder:  
Will we make it?  
Will we have a  
place to go back  
to? Will we still  
have a home, a job,  
a life in this place  
that we love?**

---



Photos courtesy of See

The thought that a revolution might, in some nebulous, cloudy future year, improve life for anyone trapped at the ground level, choking on smoke, worried about losing their home, their job, their family, their lives—from any one of a myriad of crises facing most Americans right now—is laughable. How could I make meaning out of such toxic hope?

I want to live in that world of good governance, well-managed public utilities, and representative democracy accountable to its constituents. But more and more I see those illusions fading away. There is too much disaster. Too many crises at once. Too many people, too many needs, too much disagreement on how to move into the future. Too many layers of bureaucracy between me and anyone in an official capacity who might be able to help me, my neighbors, my community. Some day, the City might say, “We’re turning the power off! Good luck!” as fires threaten on three sides—and the power might not come back on.

What is the answer to such oppressive, terrifying chaos?

We’re grateful for the City. We still need the City. But we don’t wait for the City, because the City might not come.

In this chainsaw story is a kernel of the future we’re going to get: As the three of us turn the remnants of this poor, wind-blown, rotted-out maple tree into a needed source of heat for the winter, another neighbor stops by. He shares his desire to smoke some meat using some of the maple wood, so we turn from cutting bigger chunks for my partner’s fireplace into smaller sections the neighbor could put into a smoker. He delivers a wheelbarrow-full of seasoned ash, which we empty into the truck I have borrowed from a friend. We fill his wheelbarrow full of newly-cut maple and send him on his way, grinning. A tiny community has arisen spontaneously on this street among people who aren’t all relying on rescue or support from an official source.

A week later, I have another glimpse of the future: In Pocatello, I end up couch-surfing in two different homes before I return to my tiny home building project in Portland. A friend of mine from Lost Valley down in Dexter, the intentional community where I normally live, fol-

lows me to Pocatello in search of breathable air. We’ll find a place for him, too, as my hosts work their social networks to take care of us climate refugees. While I’m gone from Lost Valley, a woman and her five-year-old daughter who live on a block full of burned-out homes in Southern Oregon will wind up in Dexter and staying in my RV, themselves refugees and strangers to me, waiting for the utilities to get turned back on so they can return to their own, thankfully still standing, house.

Another group of evacuees from Lost Valley end up in Bend in a failed attempt to escape the apocalyptic smoke, run out of money for the AirBnB they’re staying in after a few days, and then are forced to take a baby to the hospital as she develops “viral” symptoms. The community at Lost Valley—both those still in Dexter, and those who have evacuated—rallies, and in a couple of hours sends the small group of five enough money to get them to another AirBnB on the coast, where the air has cleared up, to wait for the results of the three COVID-19 tests they end up needing.

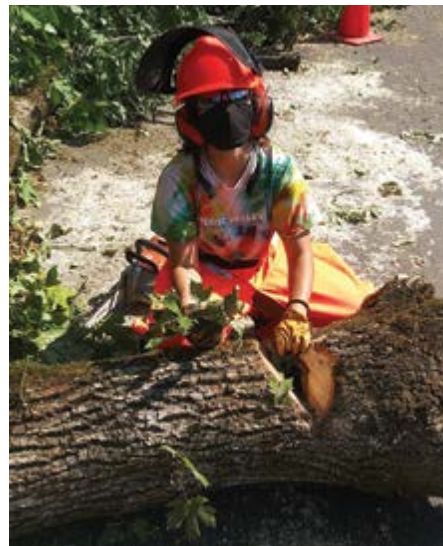
The people who stay on campus pull HEPA filters into the lodge and designate it a “clean air zone,” complete with double-door airlock. Some of them sleep there. Hoses run water all over campus to try to reduce the fire risk as the threat from the Holiday Farm Fire and another fire, started closer by and put out quickly, impact our neighborhood. Those of us traveling and those of us who stay all wonder: Will we make it? Will we have a place to go back to? Will we still have a home, a job, a life in this place that we love? And of course, the ever-present threat of COVID-19 looms over us as we move into and out of places and spaces where protecting ourselves and others from the threat of the virus takes a back seat to protecting our ability to breathe at all.

This is the future, just as it is our past: Impromptu community, strangers, friends, family, neighbors, and intentional, chosen community, coming together to protect and support each other. To evacuate if needed, and to stay and fight when capable and called upon. These stories are happening everywhere around us now, drowned out in the chattering voices of doom and dismay that pour like toxic yellow sludge from the throats of those elected to lead us, or employed to inform and educate us.

Fred Rogers once said, in reference to witnessing terrible disasters on television, that hope could be found if we “looked for the helpers.” This is a good start, but it’s not the end, and it’s not the way to the future. The future I want, the future I’m helping create, is full of people helping. Full of community, compassion, love. Whether the lights stay on or not. 🌈

---

*See grew up in Colorado buried in books and snow. After joining the military and seeing the world, she moved to Oregon to dwell with the last lingering Oak trees of the Willamette Valley. She lives at Lost Valley Education and Event Center in Dexter, Oregon outside Eugene, Oregon with her corgi-dachshund mix, Chewy, and a rotating cast of hippies who light up her life ([lostvalley.org](http://lostvalley.org)).*





# CORONAVIRUS ADAPTATION IN AN URBAN COMMUNITY: Applying Difficult, Effective Precautions at Jesus People USA

*By Lyda Jackson*



Jesus People USA, also known as JPUSA, or more recently, Jesus People Chicago, formed as an intentional Christian community on Chicago's North Side in the early 1970s. It currently has approximately 200 members residing on floors 2-7 of a 10-story former hotel they call home.

Jesus People USA is an income-sharing community, supported by a variety of community-owned and -operated businesses referred to as "mission businesses." These enterprises include a commercial roofing and building supply distribution center, a custom sheet metal fabrication shop, a retail coffee shop, a professional audio design company, a graphic design enterprise, a commercial recording studio, and a record label, to name a few. Mission businesses sustain the community financially. Members not involved with generating income are able to work in areas that enable the community to operate organizationally as well as work in areas of outreach and social service. The most notable social services operated by JPUSA are Cornerstone Community Outreach, a large homeless shelter, and Friendly Towers, affordable single-room-occupancy apartments for senior citizens situated on floors 8-10 of the JPUSA community building.

When COVID-19 was identified and a stay-at-home order in the State of Illinois imminent, the community formed a Covid Response Team to assess the situation and formulate community-wide guidelines to keep both the members and the 80-90 vulnerable senior citizen renters safe. Congregate living situations, such as the community, the homeless shelter, and the senior housing, were recognized as being at great risk of infection transmission. The Covid Response Team began regular emails, to be distributed internally, to give updates regarding policy changes and information on those who may be quarantined, testing positive for COVID-19, or ill, so that practical assistance, emotional support, or prayer may be offered. These emails would also give encouragement, propose activities, and let members know whom to turn to if they were in need. Care Teams formed to regularly check in with nearly every community member as to how they were doing both physically and emotionally. If someone fell

ill, their Care Team would be there to aid and support.

Some changes that impacted every JPUSA member came into effect as soon as mid-March 2020; others were implemented as time went on and more was known about the virus. These changes became challenging for many people.

The Covid Response Team identified all guest rooms and group dormitories as potential quarantine areas, and asked each community member to find someone to be their "Covid Buddy"—someone to check in on them and bring meals, run errands, etc. should they fall ill or be quarantined. Community members older or in compromised health were requested to either work remotely, if possible, or take a leave of absence from their job, particularly if it was in an area that would potentially put them at risk, such as staffing our community front desk or working at the homeless shelter. New guidelines mandated mask wearing whenever members were outside of their individual living quarters, and set capacity limits on elevators to ensure social distancing. The team posted signs and

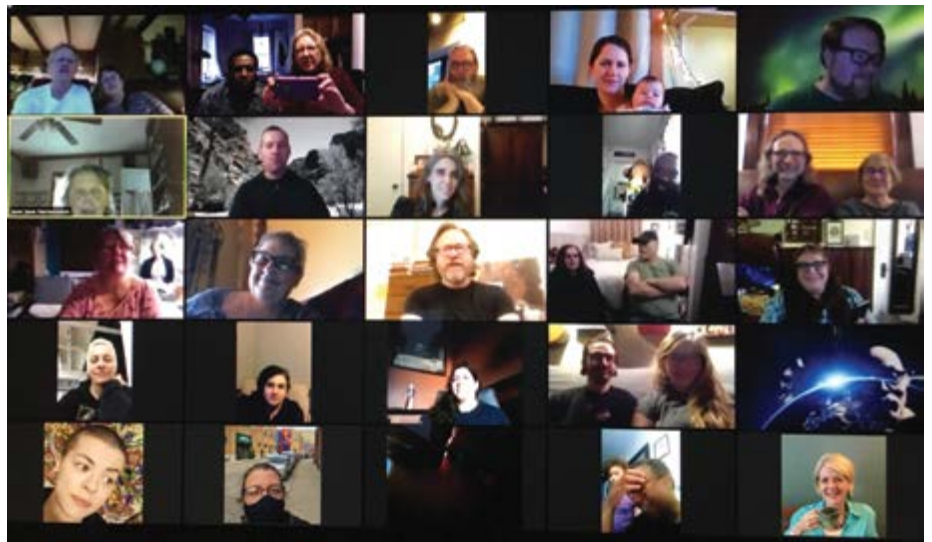
instructions in spaces with high visibility, and stepped up the required cleaning and sanitation of highly trafficked and touched common areas, especially doorknobs and buttons. Each floor was charged with similar measures in their shared common spaces.

Documents distributed to residents described COVID-19 symptoms, what to do if experiencing symptoms, when to seek medical advice, under what circumstances would a community member have to quarantine, and what did quarantine mean in the community's context. They also established guidelines for Covid Buddies and what was required of them, and outlined procedures on how to safely help an ill or quarantined member in practical ways such as delivering meals and food, taking away dishes and

garbage, doing laundry, and running errands.

One of the most difficult and urgent policies put into effect was the suspension of visitors. JPUSA has a history of welcoming guests into their community for anywhere from a couple of hours to a couple of months or longer. Many organized church, school, and other groups come to spend time experiencing life in intentional community. To curtail the spread of the coronavirus, visiting was put on hold until further notice. Also, personal visits to individuals within the community as well as to the Friendly Towers residents were suspended. Food and other deliveries to individual floors were eliminated. Eventually, visits from everyone other than medical workers—even from family members—were barred until further notice. Community members were encouraged to meet with family and friends outside of the actual JPUSA buildings and in places like the nearby parks. Eventually, this loosened to where that meeting could take place in the community's common outdoor spaces while observing social distancing.

The community made an exception to this in the case of interns who wished to come for an extended time and seriously seek whether community life was for them. The requirement for those who had already started the intern process and still wanted to come was that upon arriving at JPUSA, they would have to stay in quarantine for 14 days. This was a tough ask for those who were coming to be around people, not isolated. Six potential community members who were scheduled to start their intern-



Photos courtesy of Lyda Jackson



ship this past spring canceled their internships. In the last month, despite the added restrictions, new requests have come and there are currently the same numbers of new interns as there were this time last year.

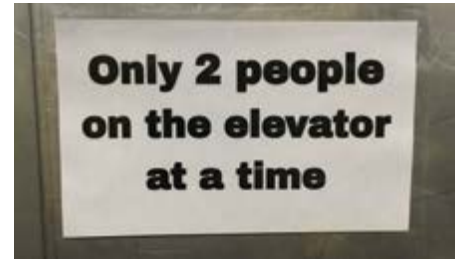
Immediate adaptations had to be made with how the community shared meals. The kitchen coordinator in concert with the Covid Response Team circulated a memo stating that the community dining room would be closed until further notice and instructing members to eat in their individual living quarters. The licensing of JPUSA's kitchen and dining room is that of a commercial kitchen and restaurant, subject to all of the stringent safety and sanitation guidelines put forth by the Chicago Department of Health. Since restaurants were closed, except for take-out, the community had to adapt accordingly. Initially, meal serving was by kitchen staff onto plates, rather than the self-serve buffet style that had formerly been in place. As regulations in Chicago tightened, more drastic changes followed. Kitchen manager Laura Crozier stated, "One of the biggest changes to meeting the challenges and needs of our community while keeping everyone safe is to pre-package every food being served, use single-serve containers for all items, and create a method of serving that reduces the spread of illness while at the same time keeping people moving quickly through and out of small spaces."

The community staggered meal service times according to the floor JPUSA members lived on, in order to avoid overcrowding in the serving areas and allow for social distancing. Additionally, community members could obtain food preparation staples such as flour, sugar, spices, and oils, etc., usually purchased in bulk quantities from a kitchen staff member at designated times, as well as perishable items, for personal use and preparation in the "floor kitchen" where the member lived. In addition to regular hand washing, wearing of disposable food service gloves was now required to receive food. The necessary adaptations seemed unfamiliar, yet were an expression of care. Laura Crozier explains, "These changes have affected the types of foods we cook and serve, and our areas of service. Some kitchen responsibilities have been shifted, temporarily eliminated, or reduced, while others increased. Our communion with each other has been deeply affected, and we miss those daily times. We miss choosing our own amounts of food each night. We miss glass dinnerware. We are discouraged at the use of Styrofoam, plastic, and single-serve containers. But our #1 concern is keeping our community safe and healthy. And our #2 concern is cooking with lots of love and bringing joy to each meal."

Jesus People USA's mission businesses have felt impacts from the pandemic but

have remained open as most have been deemed "essential businesses." Some have struggled and a few had short periods of layoffs for employees, but a Federal Payroll Protection Loan made it possible to retain the non-community workers. Some businesses have actually expanded and/or explored new opportunities that coincidentally coincided with the pandemic. Several months prior to the shutdown, Lakefront Supply, the community's largest mission business, expanded. Its subsidiary, Builders Warehouse, launched an online store for commercial roofers and builders to get materials and have them shipped nationwide directly to the worksite. It has grown exponentially and hired additional paid employees to keep up with the demand. Zeppelin Design Labs received a commission from the National Basketball Association to provide over 100 microphones to be installed under their courts' flooring to amplify sounds for game broadcasts. Everybody's Coffee initially saw a slump in business, but it quickly picked up with the addition of curbside service and the launch of an ordering app that they had already developed.

Cornerstone Community Outreach (CCO), the large homeless shelter founded by Jesus People USA and the largest employer of non-community members, saw the greatest upheaval for the homeless residents and staff, community and



non-community members. Drastic policies came into effect regulating and restricting every aspect of shelter life. Members of the executive team worked directly with the Illinois Department of Public Health, the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, and countless other agencies to map out strategies to keep the residents safe. A Federal Payroll Protection Loan enabled the organization to retain employees, provide paid leave under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, and offer hazard pay and overtime opportunities. A generous grant from the City of Chicago made it possible to upgrade some of the single-adult sleeping quarters to ensure social distancing and thus reduce the risk of infection. The family programs intentionally reduced the population to open up individual family rooms as potential quarantine space. As September came, these rooms were transformed into virtual learning centers to accommodate remote learning for school-aged children. This effort featured on local news broadcasts as well as the front page of the *Chicago Tribune* on Tuesday, September 8, 2020. Changes made in food service included temporarily eliminating a Saturday neighborhood meal. CCO's weekly food pantry now distributes pre-bagged groceries out of the front door instead of allowing customers to enter the building and "shop." Shelter residents receive pre-packaged meals delivered directly to their program, which must be consumed in their living quarters instead of a communal dining room. The Illinois Department of Public Health, along with other health care agencies, has worked closely with CCO to provide regular on-site COVID-19 testing for residents and staff. Other protocols have decreased capacity and affected intake processes. Because of these measures, CCO has seen a much lower infection rate than was anticipated for this vulnerable population.

The heart of community life is human connection, and during this time of restriction, some have weathered it better than others. The relative isolation has made for a particularly lonely time for many adults who are single, divorced, or widowed. For some families, particularly those with teens, it has been a time of closer family connections, since the teens cannot regularly be off with their friends in person. There have been challenges processing things as a community that are not Covid-related. One example is that early in the stay-at-home order, one of the adults in the community passed away unexpectedly. It is difficult to not have the ability to mourn that loss corporately as had been the practice. Some community leaders find it a stressful time, as they are the ones who have developed and put in place the best practices in order to keep everyone safe. Though most members adhere to the guidelines, it is an uncomfortable and awkward position for these leaders to have the pressure of being thought of as the "Covid Police."

JPUSA has found that when facing great challenges, opportunities for even greater creativity arise. Weekly in-person community meetings were replaced by Zoom gatherings. After the novelty wears off, it takes a lot of imagination to make these interesting and flow smoothly. Monthly birthday celebrations, complete with lots of treats delivered to each floor, and occasionally corporate online group video games, happen via online platform. A Birthday Team developed to publicly celebrate birthdays and to make sure that no community member, from the youngest to the oldest, is inadvertently forgotten on their special day. Artwork sprang up to celebrate church holidays in the front lobby of the community house and other places. On Easter morning, one of the teens stood on an upper floor fire escape and loudly played an Easter hymn on his trumpet for the neighborhood to hear. All over the building, community members leaned out of their windows following this and shouted several times in unison, "He is Risen! He is Risen, indeed! Alleluia!" In September, the community encouraged all members to participate in small groups to reinforce connection and to explore different things such as Bible Studies, Prayer, Low-Impact Aerobics, Writing Workshop, and Board Games. Some take place via Zoom; others are in person, but are limited by Covid capacity. JPUSA's neighborhood block club is helping develop plans for a Covid-safe Trick or Treat Halloween

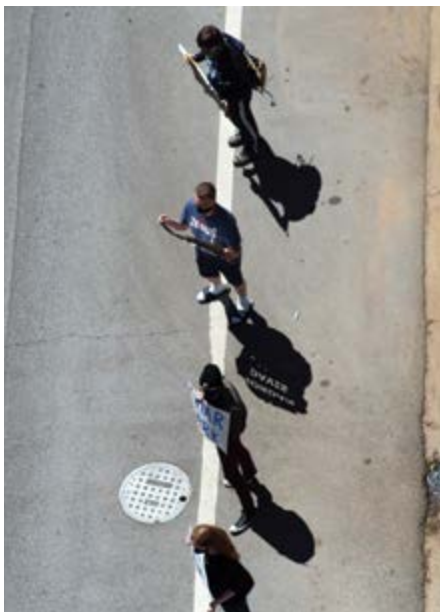
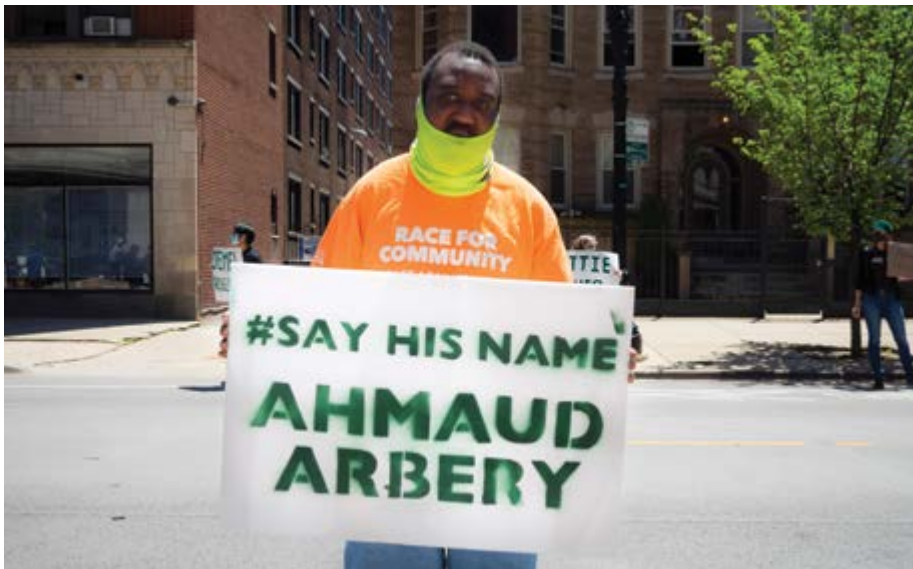
activity for the neighborhood kids.

With racial tensions rising in our country and Chicago being a hotbed of unrest, many community members longed for a way to express support and solidarity for their brothers and sisters of color. Many regularly participate in various organized peaceful demonstrations. Since June 1, Jesus People USA has held a weekly two-hour Sunday afternoon silent vigil, lining both sides of the street, holding a sign with the name of an unarmed person of color who was killed by law enforcement. A focus group called Journey Toward Anti-Racism has also formed; each month it highlights a book, film, essay, or other media with guided reflection and meditation, and a safe small-group discussion.

We can learn many lessons in com-

munity, but in times of crisis, care for one another is intentional and sacrificial. In contrast, with outside activities curtailed and life somewhat slowed, it is necessary to embrace the relative solitude as well. The coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated the significance and necessity for community, connection, and communal living in the world at large. We need each other. 🐦

*Lyda Jackson has been a member of Jesus People USA (JPUSA) since 1975, joining as a teen directly out of high school. She is currently in her fourth "community career." She serves as the Payroll and Benefits Coordinator for the 60+ non-community employees of Cornerstone Community Outreach, a JPUSA-founded and -operated homeless shelter. Lyda and her husband, Ron, celebrated 37 years of wedded bliss this year and have two adult children. Lyda has been a Communal Studies Association (CSA) member since 2000 and serves on the CSA Board. Additionally, she participates in the Nurturing Communities Network, an informal network of Christ-centered intentional communities. In her spare time she enjoys reading, traveling, taking photos, visiting museums, shape-note singing, swimming, taking long walks, and spending time with her husband. This article is adapted from a presentation at the Communal Studies Association's annual conference held October 1-3, 2020 (originally planned to take place at the Historic Ephrata Cloister in Pennsylvania, but moved online instead).*



This group of photos by Thomas Wray

# Two Elders Locked Down in Ecuador

By Rev. Jacqueline Zaleski Mackenzie, Ph.D.



We moved to Ecuador, South America, to ease health challenges. We had no idea that we had chosen the best possible location, during a worldwide pandemic, for a retired couple to be located. The reasons are varied and nearly all positive.

## Ecuador's Customs

For us the best part of living in Ecuador is how accepted we have been into the everyday lives of rural native-born Ecuadorians. They are kind, smart, skilled, respectful (especially of Elders), and hardworking. When the COVID-19 shutdown hit, we were stunned at the level of care, kindness, understanding, and sincerely expressed respect we received. The government-issued mandates included that no one over 60 years of age was to leave their homes after March 17, 2020. Anyone having no other option, like no other family members to shop for them or a doctor's appointment for themselves, should be expected to receive unsolicited help. Per local customs, a younger Ecuadorian should be as helpful to any Elder as possible, and they have all been.

This farm had 15 to 20 employees before the pandemic. When

the US was locked down, income into the farm from the US was drastically reduced. Therefore, the absentee owner scaled back to four farm laborers (aged 30s to 60s), the 30-something male manager, and the manager's sister, who is the mother of 10-year-old twins. They all lived full-time on the farm. They are all rural-raised Ecuadorians. None of them have ever seemed frustrated; they have always been cooperative and friendly.

The few times I've ventured into the local village to access cash from our bank, I observed the same obedient behavior of those following government restrictions: wearing masks; obeying 14:00 to 5:00 curfews for weeks; no access to public buses; no public gatherings; restricted alcohol sales; schools, sports, and religious activities ceased; highly regulated driving restrictions. Regardless, Ecuadorians all over town appeared relaxed and accepting.

I laugh now that I walked into a bank in a foreign country in mid-April 2020, wearing two face masks, a face shield, and rubber gloves. My language skills were limited. However, they treated me like royalty. Since then, a younger Ecuadorian man makes our monthly bank deposits to enable paying all our bills. We leave only for necessary medical care.

## Ecuador Is Independent

A friend of mine recently posted this anonymous quote related to COVID-19's effects on Ecuador: "On the positive side of the ledger, Ecuador still has many of the strengths that it has always had; Ecuador is not dependent on others for the food to feed its people, the oil to run its equipment, and it also owns a plentiful supply of clean water. Besides, Ecuador also has direct-port access to the whole world, a stable national currency, strong and abundant fishing, and fertile agricultural lands. The country is filled with diverse and plentiful natural beauty and generous, kind people."

## Ecuador Is Inflation-Resistant

Additionally, if your US Social Security is cut, keep in mind that visa requirements in Ecuador were just lowered from \$800 or \$900 to \$400 a month minimum government-backed income for one person or \$500 for a couple. Don't count on this lasting as regulations often change and without warning in such a small country. What is notable is that a stand-alone home can be rented for \$250 a month—often including utilities. We first arrived in Ecuador in September 2013; we have not seen prices increase.

## Ecuador Is Eco-Friendly

To that, I add that Ecuador is environmentally dedicated to protecting its resources. A visitor or resident can appreciate or explore the Amazon basin, the Andes, cloud forests, Pacific Ocean coastline, and the Galápagos Islands of Ecuador—unique climatic niches that harbor ecological treasures and a plethora of flora and fauna.

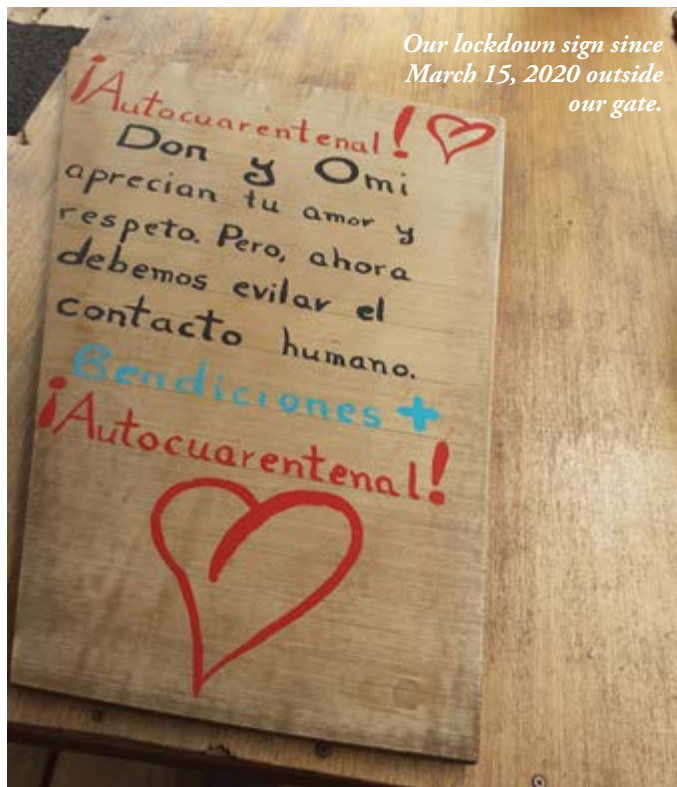
In the fall of 2018, we moved onto leased land to enable building an Eco-Hobbit Homestead ([www.facebook.com/jacquelinezmackenzie](http://www.facebook.com/jacquelinezmackenzie)), a self-sustainable "Last Dance" lifestyle choice after

decades of building eco-friendly residences in Florida, Arizona, Hawaii, and Belize. This home would not become another cost-inflated piece of real estate; the farm would own it outright now but not occupy it until after our deaths. This arrangement was possible because, in August of 2016, we had met the absentee facilitator of a farm dedicated to permaculture. The rural site was and still is managed by native Ecuadorians. Our ages, 77 (Don) and 71 (Jacquie), and not our lack of experience or enthusiasm, is why it took two years to finally get the approval to move forward with building our last residential project.

Over 70 volunteers from all over our planet visited this farm from late September 2018 through January 2020. The last volunteer, before the shutdown was a male (I'll call him Charlie) in his mid-20s. Charlie arrived in the first week of March for a two-week stay. Before arriving, he had planned to start an ecovillage in Colombia; he came here to learn. His plan was to buy land for less money in Colombia.

Charlie was a self-starter but lacked planning, design, agribusiness, eco-building, or volunteer management experience. Countless times he would stop by to ask us questions that became increasingly more insightful. We learned that this change was the result of exploring not only these 500 hectares but also surrounding areas in a wider and broader range. He would ask rural native-born Ecuadorian farmers questions about the climate, local plants, seasonal crop rotation, and anything else. He'd often be invited into modest farm homes to spend the night. Although he left on July 15, he did not fly home as initially planned. He found more people to learn from; he has sent us digital messages several times, explaining that he has remained in Ecuador.

As teachers, we were thrilled to watch the rapid changes in Charlie's knowledge; something we'd seen at a lesser level in many



*Our lockdown sign since March 15, 2020 outside our gate.*



*Inside front gate: lap robe made from gifted yarn during the COVID-19 lockdown.*

Photos courtesy of Rev. Jacqueline Zaleski Mackenzie, Ph.D.

other volunteers who had stayed a shorter time. Charlie had created his role as a student, paid only by bartering his skills and growing into a capable ecovillage manager through his initiative and passion for absorbing all the knowledge possible by applying his enthusiastic personality. His remarkable attitude from the week after he arrived until his last message has been, “This was the best possible place for me to be during this pandemic! I’ve learned so much.”

### Ecuador’s Climate

A wide variety of foods can be grown in Ecuador. Our area’s climate is rarely below 58°F or above 86°F, but the challenge is only 12 hours of daylight year-round. We have learned to adapt to this pattern by preserving food with solar drying or home canning. We also have to save adapted seeds and buy short-season seeds too.

### Access to Basics in Ecuador

We “Old Farts” are both children of Depression-Era Parents. Keeping a backstock of two or three months of essential foods like grains, beans, and even household items is an everyday normal. We have upped the output from our veggie gardens and worked hard to be at peace with this situation by strongly connecting with our extensive gardens.

As a minister and teacher, I am staying engaged with others by offering online help to Parents now in a Teacher’s role ([www.facebook.com/groups/609932113059432](http://www.facebook.com/groups/609932113059432)) and by managing our nonprofit charity ([www.facebook.com/pg/Summerland-MonasteryCAW/posts](http://www.facebook.com/pg/Summerland-MonasteryCAW/posts)).

### Reflections on COVID-19: Positive Outcomes and Additional Challenges Worldwide

**As retired US Teachers**, we are hopeful that parents will

- (1) have more respect for teachers;
- (2) be more engaged in the way, what, and how their children learn.

We are also have concerns about

- (1) social delays in children;
- (2) more inequality in educational opportunities for already marginalized youths who are dark-skinned, disabled, and/or second-language learners.

**As Deep Ecologists**, we are hopeful that

- (1) “consumers” will become more eco-conscious citizens;
- (2) more people will work from home;
- (3) fewer miles will continue to be driven, and less time spent in cars;
- (4) more people will grow and eat fresh veggies.

We also see these challenges:

- (1) more ex-pats have relied on processed foods;
- (2) those financially able have hoarded household supplies;
- (3) economically marginalized rural people have had to rely on food banks;
- (4) economically marginalized rural people want to get back to face-to-face employment.

**As Native-Born US Citizens**, we feel helpless to do anything about

- (1) COVID-19 cases and deaths;
- (2) political chaos;
- (3) limited educational opportunities at all levels;
- (4) unemployment across the globe;
- (5) the effects of climate change in far too many ways;
- (6) a new economic recession;
- (7) inequality in many forms: BLM protests; police brutality protests; riots; peaceful demonstrations.

Like everyone else worldwide, we will continue to wait and see. 🙏

---

*The Rev. Jacqueline Zaleski Mackenzie, Ph.D. is a nonprofit administrator, advocate for organic farming, educator, mother/grandmother/wife, social scientist, and author of 14 books. Specializing in Business Systems Management, she earned her M.S. and B.S. from the Florida Institute of Technology. She later earned a Ph.D. and Ed.S. in Special Education, Bilingual Education, and Sociocultural Studies from the University of Arizona. Her passion for protecting our Planet is reflected in her position: she has the highest Clergy Status in The Church of All Worlds. Find out more about her at [www.drworldproductions.com/dr-universe](http://www.drworldproductions.com/dr-universe).*





*Rocky Hill Cohousing birthday parade.*



Richard Gettler

# How Have Intentional Communities Fared through the Pandemic?

*By Cynthia Tina*

**W**ith people's lives upended across the globe, we can't help but wonder, how would we have responded to the coronavirus crisis if we all lived in intentional communities—ecovillages, cohousing, and the like—instead of our conventional neighborhoods?

And how have existing intentional communities fared through the pandemic? Are they better off or worse than the mainstream? What can we learn from how they have dealt with this crisis?

Maybe intentional communities are more financially or materially self-sufficient and therefore more resilient during a pandemic. Perhaps their highly communal living arrangements make them more susceptible to the disease. Could they be suffering less from loneliness and isolation during lockdown? Are they more stable and even generous during this time?

To find out the answers, the Foundation for Intentional Community (FIC) partnered with the Intentional Communities Desk in May 2020 and sent out a survey to intentional communities in our Communities Directory so we could learn how they have responded to the pandemic.

Of the 75 intentional communities that responded to the survey 68 percent are based in the United States, with others spread out from the UK to Peru and all the way to Australia and New Zealand.

The stories these communities share are fascinating, with some rural communities basically unaffected or even experiencing positive changes since coronavirus, and other more urban communities especially challenged to step up together and support each other through crisis. Communities have had to come up with creative ways to keep each other safe and to stay connected even while typical community activities, such as shared meals, are on pause. They have had to navigate internal tensions about

how seriously to take the virus and what levels of response are appropriate.

Intentional communities offer possibilities for how we all can survive and thrive through crisis by coming together.

• • •

**O**ur analysis of the survey results shows that communities have been impacted by the virus in a variety of ways on a pretty clear spectrum. On one end of the spectrum are communities who have been minimally or positively affected by the pandemic (approximately 15 percent of survey respondents). On the other end of the spectrum are communities who have been severely or negatively impacted (approximately 5 percent of survey respondents). Most communities fall somewhere in between these two ends of the spectrum.

A few remote and land-based communities report how for them daily life hasn't changed all too much. Residents

were already used to growing much of their own food, delegating trips to the grocery store to a few individuals in the community, and earning an income within the community's economy or through remote work.

"Nothing has really changed for us. We set up [our community] with a design to ride out these types of events—pandemics, natural disasters, financial meltdowns. We are a closed community on over 1000 acres with private roads and two access points to BLM and state land. We have a full Equestrian Center, Library (books, over 350 DVDs, games, puzzles, magazines), gym, spa, and three miles of interior roads/trails for walking, biking, riding. We are adding a pool table and probably a pool this year. We have a garden and our permaculture people are getting set up to add an additional 80 acres of food forest, aquaponics, and massive greenhouses. We have a resident-only grocery store opening up this fall. We keep chickens and ducks for eggs. We have an Exchange Program for cash/barter/trade for/exchange money within the community and we hire work done from within the community so people still have an income. We are remote so most people stock up on personal supplies."

—*Zhenna, Caballos de las Estrellas Intelligent Living Community, New Mexico and Arizona, US*

Some community members even report experiencing an improved quality of life since the pandemic.

"As an urban intentional community focused on social and environmental justice, our members are often all over the city and traveling around the country in service of movements. During the shelter-in-place time there has been a unique magic of all being here together, gathering so much more often than we used to, eating together, growing more food than ever, processing herbal medicine, distributing food, medicine, and supplies to our neighbors... To me, it feels in many ways so much more like the 'village' life we've been longing for, that the pressures of our current systems so often pull us away from."

—*Morgan H Curtis, Canticle Farm, California, US*

"We have 33 people trapped in paradise, nine of which are volunteers from many countries. We are enjoying it immensely..."

—*Tom Charles Osher, Chambalabamba, Loja, Ecuador*

"We are functioning better than in past years, due to circumstances related to the pandemic... There is an apparent feeling of solidarity everywhere inside and outside the community."

—*Huehucoyotl Ecovillage, Santo Domingo Ocotitlán, Morelos State, Mexico*

"We are all healthy and agree that we are lucky to live in a beautiful setting with plenty of green space, and plenty of meaningful work and occupation to keep us happy and engaged. We have created a 'new normal'—work teams based on house groups, celebrations too, and leisure-time pursuits, all within the same groupings. This has given rise to a buoyant mood, creativity, and caring for each other. Our day attendees and some employees are not able to join us at the moment, but each house group is in frequent contact (via Skype, phone, or Zoom) with those who belong to their group, and some members have produced a lovely newsletter each fortnight which can be shared with families and friends."

—*Elisabeth Phethean, Beannachar Campbell Community, Aberdeenshire, Scotland*

Still other communities have experienced a degree of stability that has enabled them to look beyond caring for their own community and help out in the surrounding area through distributing food to essential workers, sewing free masks, and producing medicine.

"Those who are younger and healthier kept themselves busy by sewing about 2,000 surgical masks. They would take them out to places where there were elderly people, or to shopkeepers, and offer them for free. Our immediate vicinity was noticeably more protected as a result, and one clinic said there have been no infections here so far."

—*Dave, Jesus Christians, Victoria, Australia*

"As we have a laboratory of medicinal plants, we here daily making a natural tonic to prevent the entry of the virus and to boost our immune system..."

—*Sri Advaita, Willka Hampi, Perú*

Not all communities have had such an easy time, however. Some have had to make major adjustments and even deal with internal disagreement or differing interpretations of coronavirus itself. Much of the public divisiveness over the degree of seriousness and action required in the pandemic has played out in the microcosm of intentional communities. Residents have had to wrestle with issues such as wearing masks or not, requiring



Sandy Thomson

*Spontaneous porch and pathway party at Heartwood Cohousing.*

heightened levels of cleanliness and sanitation, restricting visitors, and more. All of this has created tension and additional anxiety in some communities.

“Being at the epicenter of the crisis in NYC, we have stopped our short-term sublets and guest room rentals. Our long-term residents have worked together to come up with social distancing and disinfecting guidelines used throughout the house. We have had one resident with COVID-19. He was quarantined for 20 days. We were diligent in providing him with food and a private bathroom. The virus did not spread through the house. WooHoo!! It is a work in progress and has been emotionally exhausting.”

—Robin Drake, Pennington Friends House, New York City, US

“There were tensions. Some people were critical of the efforts of others, and accused them of ‘not taking this seriously.’... We also have experienced, well-trained facilitators who guided us through these difficult times with good humour and grace. We started out in an atmosphere of fear and anxiety, but as time passed, we adjusted. I feel incredibly fortunate to be living in such a supportive community during this kind of social upheaval. It bodes well for the future.”

—Kathryn-Jane Hazel, Pacific Gardens Cohousing Community, Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada

“We have been seeing conflicts in some of our houses in personal differences of how to manage mental and social health vs. physical health. Co-op staff and leadership continue to guide houses to follow CDC guidelines when these issues are brought up.”

—Nola Warner, MSU Student Housing Cooperative, Greater Lansing Area (Lansing and East Lansing), Michigan, US

“The residents have had a number of meetings and opinions vary from strictly following every single state guideline to looking for ways we could vary some. We’ve had some contention about acting (example inviting a visitor) without us all agreeing. This has led to good discussion, no perfect resolution but aware that even with our current decision method of Sociocracy this is a unique situation. Do we all have to agree on everything; if one or two disagree how does it feel if they



Sharon Villines

choose to self-isolate in their home? No answers, just the impact of this situation. Generally we are being very cautious and careful with protocols to stay healthy.”

—Kirsten Rohde, The Goodenough Community, Washington, US

“There has been stress. Our community has 30 members. About a fourth think we need very disciplined health safety measures, about a fourth think there is no need for them to be extreme, and about half more or less are inclined to have more safety procedures than not but they’re rather relaxed about it. Those estimates may not be completely accurate but they do represent a difference in opinion. This all came to the fore when some from the ‘more minimum safety procedures’ people wanted to create an exercise room (something to which we have never really given much thought). This horrified the ‘maximum safety people.’ In our last community meeting, the issue was not really resolved but the gym people pushed forward, many think in a very heavy-handed way, and went ahead and created the gym. The coronavirus situation, therefore, occasioned a discord that probably would have never surfaced without. First, interest in the gym was largely driven by the ‘shelter in place’ orders and second, opposition was strong because it was seen as a risky practice. The good news is that there now is a general agreement that our community should objectify its decision-making process and make it much more clear by putting it in writing. There was never much motivation to do this in the past due to some unique conditions in our community. The fracture making this necessary has appeared precisely because of matters related directly to the virus.”

—Terry Bergdall, GreenRise Intentional Community, Uptown neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois, US

“Some of our community members had envisaged to leave for other places/communities. They continued staying with us, as travel or moving was not easy or possible. So we’re now stuck here with people that don’t fit/want to stay with us...”

—Rainer von Leoprechting, Obenaus Community, Austria, Steiermark

Some communities have come up with creative ways to keep vulnerable members safe or to protect the majority of members from a minority of essential workers living within the community.

“The hardest issue has been knowing how to handle the fact that we have a frontline healthcare worker who, by the nature of his job, is put at risk every time he goes to work. As he started working directly with COVID-19 patients, the anxiety of some of the members with preexisting conditions went sky high. We finally had a meeting



*Many folks today are doing porch portraits. This is Susan Atlas, Val Nybo, and their dog Toby.*

in which we discussed how we could keep the risk in the community low while still supporting him. We came to an agreement in which he uses a different kitchen (there are two in the building), one bathroom in the house is dedicated for him, he generally doesn't use most of the rest of the house, and if we do see him, we stay six feet apart. In turn, we cook for him and do his chores so that he can rest when he is home. We also leave him flowers and notes. When he is here on community nights or special occasions, we use a very big room that is not our dining room. We set up separate tables, like a restaurant, that are all at least six feet apart. He sits at his own table at the head of the room and we serve him. Then he can still be with us and we can talk. This isn't the perfect solution, but it is what we can all live with for now."

—Lisa J Rademacher, *Sophia Community, Illinois, US*

When coronavirus first became apparent in early spring, numerous intentional communities recognized the threat to their highly communal resident population and were quick to establish ad hoc committees to produce guidelines or safety protocols for the community. Here are a few examples of such protocols:

- **Coronavirus Health Guidelines for Communal Houses**—advice from a house community on how to prevent virus spread ([docs.google.com/document/d/1zfUn1UDQbGAQWHXm\\_1mBzu2acmUJXwkwf-F1U-URd50/edit#heading=h.vmrlyfe15csw](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zfUn1UDQbGAQWHXm_1mBzu2acmUJXwkwf-F1U-URd50/edit#heading=h.vmrlyfe15csw))

- **Earhaven Ecovillage Pandemic Response Protocol**—example of a protocol to support community residents in staying healthy ([docs.google.com/document/d/1-StQcllrxcx\\_xzHLXk951cb-S6Qpfyh\\_FoBWYIDcDio/edit#heading=h.itymvzgerlls](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-StQcllrxcx_xzHLXk951cb-S6Qpfyh_FoBWYIDcDio/edit#heading=h.itymvzgerlls))

- **NASCO Recommendations**—specific recommendations for communal living spaces ([www.nasco.coop/news/coronavirus-update-resources-2378#community](http://www.nasco.coop/news/coronavirus-update-resources-2378#community))

- **Kaleidoscope Community's COVID19 Precautions**—coliving guidelines for shelter-in-place ([docs.google.com/document/d/1NotBJRTLnfUtHEy6idWl862-45VratGSirVBtLMD0I/edit?fbclid=IwAR3C61CUub3bbsIVRPBvnxVwOp4-FgJj\\_9hajLUDG9yCbgOvBV2gYkF\\_iU0](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NotBJRTLnfUtHEy6idWl862-45VratGSirVBtLMD0I/edit?fbclid=IwAR3C61CUub3bbsIVRPBvnxVwOp4-FgJj_9hajLUDG9yCbgOvBV2gYkF_iU0))

"At the very beginning of the Corona Crisis, a Safety and Health ad-hoc Committee formed, and came up with some guidelines for the community. We met via Zoom, and agreed to basic precepts, such as no meals and no use of the Common House except for essential activities such as laundry, to avoid possible Corona contamination. Basically, we're sheltering in place in our homes, going outside only for exercise and essential activities such as medical appointments and grocery shopping. We're communicating both for meetings and for social events through Zoom, but see each other occasionally on the walkways as we get our mail, and can chat from an appro-

priate distance. So far, I think people in the community are doing okay, given the strange times we're in."

—Laurie Friedman, *Muir Commons Cohousing, Davis, California, US*

"We held emergency meetings as soon as the BC government announced the COVID-19 restrictions, first, using social distancing, and then, via Zoom. We followed the Jamaica Plains Cohousing model as our guide in setting up protocols, moving through stages one through six as the crisis worsened. We have two nurses living here who gave us good advice on disinfecting, social distancing, and other information we needed to keep our vulnerable community members safe. We set a schedule for disinfecting all the touch-points in our building—door handles, light switches, entry phone, mailbox, elevator buttons, etc.—and established a buddy system so that all the residents had someone they could call on for help if needed. We set up a buddy family system so that the children could play together and still maintain the protocols. We let families with children who had to work from home use some of the common rooms as their work-space, with the condition that they had to maintain and disinfect them after every use."

—Kathryn-Jane Hazel, *Pacific Gardens Cohousing Community, Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada*

"Of our 28 or so members, most of us are sheltered in place. One or two have to work outside. Several others have relocated to family in other states to weather the storm. We have a strict regimen isolating from each other by wearing masks whenever we are in the kitchen (all other commons have been closed, except for a gym we set up), and try to maintain a six-foot distance from each other. When we enter the kitchen or other common areas, we immediately wash our hands. We've replaced our vinegar/water solution for wiping off counters with a weak bleach/water solution and teams on cleanup duty sanitize all countertops, drawer/cabinet pulls, light switches, faucets, etc. Separate solution spray bottles are kept in the bathrooms and showers to sanitize those facilities. We have gloves for when we go shopping. Upon returning with groceries, we wipe everything down

with our bleach solution before bringing it into the kitchen. We have a plan, protocols, and a room set aside if anyone comes down with the virus.”

—*Steve Ediger, GreenRise Intentional Community, Uptown, Chicago, Illinois*

“We have a volunteer pandemic task force that is making recommendations to the community and working to make the building work best for this situation (altering ventilation in some areas, leaving fans on, making signs to leave certain windows open a certain amount for X long, adding whiteboards outside common house rooms to indicate when they are available for use). We wear masks outside and maintain a six-foot distance. The Task Force is meeting this evening to make a reco on what kind of gatherings are recommended (how many people at how much distance in what areas)—as we try to get our social mojo going again. Common meals were discontinued in late March. Our Interiors team (with the help of the task force) has set up a list of areas that are sanitized daily by volunteers. Some are helping those at more risk by doing their grocery shopping, or asking around to see if anyone else needs something so fewer people need to go out. Socially, our biz and team meetings have gone to Zoom (with a purchased subscription to allow more than 40 minutes time).”

—*Patricia Boomer, Mountain View Cohousing Community, California, US*

Nearly all the communities who responded to the survey reported an increased use of technology to stay in communication with each other. No longer able to participate in shared meals or in-person gatherings (often the essential “community glue”), groups have had to get creative about how to socialize and manage their community while practicing physical distancing.

“Meetings that would otherwise have been held in person in our common house are now held via Zoom or in smaller open-air front porch gatherings with social distancing. Email and a village Discourse forum are used for asynchronous communication. An increased emphasis on community supported agriculture in periodic combined bulk orders supplies food that may otherwise have been bought individually from grocery

stores. Shared meals served in the common house have been replaced with virtual meals in which smaller groupings of residents eat meals prepared in their individual townhouses while sharing a discussion via Zoom. Some village residents participate in a silent meditative walk through the village in the evening.”

—*Todd Lewis, Shepherd Village, West Virginia, US*

“We have also tried having Common Meals where one house cooks, then neighbors bring dishes to be filled, which they take home to eat. The cooks find this unfulfilling because most of the fun of Common Meals is the camaraderie of cooking and eating together. We are going to try a Zoom Common Meal where everyone makes the ‘same’ meal and shares time with each other via Zoom.”

—*Kenyon Erickson, Blueberry Hill Cohousing, Virginia, US*

New members recruitment and membership onboarding processes have also had to go virtual in light of the pandemic.

“We’ve held Virtual Open Houses via Zoom. We have one available unit for sale and given the need for physical separation and the need to limit visitors to our lodge we are communicating with potential buyers by telephone and videoconferencing. If a potential buyer has reviewed the available information and indicates an eagerness to proceed with the transaction we will work to set up a safe on-site visit. Most importantly, we are supporting each other as best as we can. Shopping for a neighbor is a great example. We are all looking forward to enjoying common meals again!”

—*Jacque Bromm, Wolf Creek Lodge, Grass Valley, California, US*

Communities that rely on visitors and program participants for their income are now facing financial loss. Some are experimenting with moving in-person programs online.

“We are concerned about our annual budget because we rely on income from our guest rooms.”

—*Ellen Kemper, The Commons on the Alameda, Santa Fe, New Mexico, US*

“We are unable to hold the usual full summer of events, ours and those of other groups who use our center. This will create a very large financial loss for us... We will soon be very short of finances as our contingency fund runs out. Our finances are tied up with the retreat business and function through two nonprofits that have always run on a very tight budget. We are engaging in fundraising.

“We enjoy gardening and working on projects together and feel blessed that we are on these 67 acres while some are cooped up in a single house or apartment in Seattle. It has been an unusually beautiful spring. This has brought us closer through working together but we also feel the weight of what is going on in our country, now with the



Richard Gettler

murder of George Floyd and protests on top of the uncertainty, anxiety, even fear that can free float due to the pandemic.”

—Kirsten Rohde, *The Goodenough Community, Washington, US*

An overwhelming number of community residents who responded to the survey shared how grateful they are to be living in an intentional community right now. They talk about being able to care for vulnerable residents, finding creative ways to stay connected and combat isolation, as well as seeing the crisis as an opportunity to strengthen relationships to community and place.

“We are very fortunate to have a lovely trail right out our front doors to enjoy a beautiful, shaded walk along our namesake, Wolf Creek. Our gardens our beautiful and provide lots of lovely outdoor gardening time. We are enjoying a great deal of Zoom time, be it the daily coffee hour, meetings, yoga, and ukulele practice. Lots of reading time such as *A New Kind of Science* by Stephen Wolfram or our latest book club entry, *The Words of My Father* by Yousef Bashir. Knitting, sewing, jigsaw puzzles, and adult coloring books have been fun. We have enjoyed impromptu drumming concerts on the terrace while practicing physical distancing.”

—Jacque Bromm, *Wolf Creek Lodge, Grass Valley, California, US*

“We meet every night—without fail—at 6 pm for Happy Hour on the greenway. About 8-15 people attend and we socialize for 30-45 minutes. We meet rain or shine, and we capture every evening in photographs. We had one week-long ‘fashion week’ where the young people dictated how we would dress (many complied). We have celebrated birthdays and anniversaries outside, generally six feet apart, clumped by household.”

—Anna Newcomb, *Blueberry Hill Cohousing, Virginia, US*

“Mostly, it is has been a blessing to be in community at this time because we are not so isolated. We have each other. We have game and movie nights on weekends. We used to all be so busy with work and running here and there, but now we are mostly all home.”

—Lisa J Rademacher, *Sophia Community, Illinois, US*

“Most importantly, we investigate and appreciate to the fullest extent the hidden meaning of the situation, the ‘gift’ or learning that it offers us: to increase relational work within the community, to increase efforts for personal and community autonomy and empowerment, to foster the deepest and most effective relationship with the place where we live, to prepare the way to radiate more to-

wards society in general the importance and usefulness of experiences like ours so that other groups and individuals can use it as a stimulus and inspiration, and to detect opportunities for change within the community in tune with the ‘winds of change’ that are shaking the planet profoundly.”

—Kevin Lluch, *Ecovillage Los Portales, Sevilla, Spain* 🌸

---

*This article is adapted from a blog post by Cynthia Tina originally published July 8, 2020 at [www.ic.org/intentional-communities-fared-pandemic](http://www.ic.org/intentional-communities-fared-pandemic).*

*Cynthia Tina has traveled to over a hundred intentional community projects worldwide and is Co-Director of the Foundation for Intentional Community (FIC). She helps connect people to intentional communities as a matchmaker for seekers and marketing consultant for growing projects. She was an officeholder on the Board of Trustees for the Global Ecovillage Network ([ecovillage.org](http://ecovillage.org)) (2015-2020) and was Director of the Youth Ecovillage Network NextGENNA ([nextgenna.org](http://nextgenna.org)) (2013-2018). Cynthia lives in an intentional community in Vermont where she is currently building a passive solar home and tending a permaculture garden. Book a community matchmaking session with Cynthia at [www.cynthiatina.com](http://www.cynthiatina.com).*



Sandy Thomson

*Working together six feet apart at Heartwood Cohousing.*



Sharon Vilines

*Zoom birthday at Takoma Village.*

# Coronavirus Response in Cohousing

By Indra Waters



*Residents of Shepherd Village Cohousing in Shepherdstown, West Virginia gather outdoors in the evening to enjoy music and chatting on the porch.*

Photo by David Enrich / finephotoworks.com

Like the communities movement as a whole, cohousing communities face many new challenges in the era of COVID-19. A common concern many cohousing community members share is how to stay “protected and connected” (to borrow words from cohouser Ron Ingram, originally referring to groups’ responses to the nationwide Black Lives Matter protests). How can cohousing communities stay protected and connected through all the social injustice and health liabilities posed by the pandemic?

As COVID-19 set in, cohousers already had an easy way to discuss answers to this question, as well as any and all issues vital to their communities, while staying safely at home and socially distanced: the cohousing-l listserv. In this online forum at [cohousing.org](http://cohousing.org), cohousers worldwide meet and share advice with one another. This article compiles posts from the cohousing-l archives, dealing primarily with COVID-19 but also touching on a variety of topics, including systemic racial injustice and activism following the murder of George Floyd.

As a preface to these posts, Sharon Villines, coauthor of *We The People* and resident at Takoma Village in Washington, DC, offers what her community has done in answer to the pandemic (as of September 2020).

## From Sharon Villines:

Living in a cohousing community is particularly helpful when a larger world crisis comes along—like a pandemic. We have habits and skills developed from organizing workdays, events, dinners, etc. together over the years. We share expectations, normally, on how organized we want to be and how tolerant we are of each other’s foibles.

After the shock wore off, organizing at Takoma Village to cope with isolation and “stay home” orders came together rather quickly and has continued to develop over the last six months.

We have people who buy things—Herb goes to the food co-op and the farmers’ market. Each person can order online at the co-op and pay individually. Each order is

packed and he picks up on Saturday. He takes lists for the farmers’ market, and if needed for the hardware store.

Since meals were canceled and all the restaurants closed, we soon tired of eating our own cooking. Members will take orders and do curbside pick-up at a favorite pizza place that has no delivery. Other times someone will post, “I’m ordering Thai—does anyone want anything?”

Other people run errands. “I need \_\_\_ from the pharmacy. Is anyone going out?” Deborah walks 10,000 steps each day so she circles around to shops and the post office.

We have ordered a few things bulk and the picker-upper delivers them to our door—no-contact delivery. The common house is closed down except for the laundry room and mailbox area. Particularly those with children have started requesting and reserving rooms in the common house to make conference calls or work in the quiet. The rule is one hour between reservations to clear the air in the room.

A number of us order vegetables and eggs from CSAs and Hungry Harvest.

Instead of canceling a week's order we ask if anyone else would like to take it.

People are borrowing many different kinds of things and more often than usual. Requests for an egg or one-half cup of milk are common. But in isolation over the last few weeks, requests have included:

- T-pins;
- paper, brush, pen, and ink for "an unexpected interest in calligraphy";
- rubber cement (for a bicycle tire—real rubber);
- one-and-a-half cups of rice (long grain preferred);
- a one-half-inch wooden dowel;
- two teaspoons of cinnamon;
- a clean edge tool for painting a room;
- a carpet shampooer;
- cotton sheets or pillow cases to make a mask;
- a pencil sharpener;
- a copy of *Lord of the Rings* (libraries are closed);
- letter-size manila envelope;
- postage for a seven-and-a-half-inch padded envelope;
- kitty carrier to pick up an adopted cat;
- two tablespoons of Crème de Menthe;
- Pepto-Bismol;
- actual curry leaves; and
- a reacher tool.

On Wednesdays three to six people play a game like Pictionary online—sign up by 6 pm. A group movie is planned for Friday—everyone watches at the same time and chats. Every other Sunday on Zoom, eight to 10 people discuss a film they have just watched on Kanopy during the week.

Exercise on the green has expanded to more days a week. Distanced on yoga mats, each person leads their favorite exercise. QuarantSing on Friday at 6:30 pm is led by guitar players with people singing on their balconies. Book group has gone to Netflix documentaries—watch and chat on Netflix Party. "Happy Birthday" is sung to kids on Zoom. Lots of video and joke sharing from Facebook, etc., now happens on the members' email list usually restricted to business and personal.

We have distanced workdays and figured out how to serve meals with one person at the counter at a time to pick up a plate that has already been filled—so far with pizza and salad ordered in. All eating is outside and distanced.

The most helpful thing is living in a community where everyone takes the pandemic seriously. Everyone wears a mask and distances, even at the mailboxes. No one is panicked because we aren't doing enough. The anxiety level is very low, and at the same time we aren't being policed. People who leave the grounds for visits to family or vacations get tested when they return and quarantine until test results come back. We've had no infections.

Membership meetings are so well attended on Zoom that some have requested that we continue even after the pandemic. Everyone can hear and it feels more organized: all those faces in a row with clear voices and no walking in and out.

*And here are edited excerpts from the online discussions:*

### Coronavirus mitigation

**From: Ann Zabaldo (Takoma Village, Washington, DC)**

**Date: Thu, 5 Mar 2020**

At Takoma Village in Washington DC our RISQUE pod (committee) has been requested to address coronavirus mitigation. ...

May I make a pitch right now for mitigating other contagious diseases such as colds and flu? I have a compromised immune system all year long, not just during flu season. When I get sick it's lights out as it's been for the last 2.5 weeks after catching someone's cold. But this is not about just safety for me... it's safety for the whole community...all year. When little kids get sick, inevitably the parents get sick too and pretty soon whatever bug it happens to be is circulated throughout the community. Would it be helpful to everyone to not get sick, lose work time, lose time with the family, etc. etc. etc? Why not have these procedures in place for healthy living all year? We have guidelines around food safety. Why not around hand washing? Wiping down surfaces in community spaces? And of course around coughing, handshakes, sneezing...?

The coronavirus is a serious issue. And I'm delighted to see it sparking conversation about safety. Let's put these procedures in place for healthy living all year for everyone.

Sandy Thomson



*We will find a way to be together.  
Neighborhood gathering at Heartwood  
Cohousing, March 21, 2020.*



## Coronavirus in cohousing

**From: Fern Selzer (New Brighton Cohousing, Aptos, California)**

**Date: Sun, 22 Mar 2020**

I would like to hear what you are all doing in your communities right now... Especially, what are you doing to have fun and connect? I am looking for some ideas for things we could do in the courtyard or from our balconies that would help us enjoy each other's company. Our balconies all face out on the same courtyard. We are all doing so much on Zoom already, I'd like some other options. Any ideas?

How we have been doing so far: We are just outside the SF Bay Area in Aptos, California so we are in lockdown. Since we have so many social workers, teachers, and nonprofit workers amongst us, so far all are keeping their jobs and doing their work online, so it isn't an economic challenge as of yet. Parents have not been letting their children in the Common House. People aren't really getting tests in California, so we must assume that some of us are carrying the virus. Families make their own decisions about how they will structure things inside the house, but otherwise, everyone is staying six feet apart.

We put cleaner and paper towels at various locations in the CH. I don't really think most people are using the CH at this point except for laundry. We suspended having guests in the CH guest rooms without getting everyone's permission, and so far no one has asked. We are having Sunday dinners, when the weather is good, by sitting outside at least six feet apart and bringing our own food and chairs. We are conducting meetings online or by phone.

We are setting up the laundry so that everyone has a day every week, that they selected, to do their laundry. People are to stay out of the laundry room unless it is their day. We have two laundry rooms so we have enough for every family to have one day. Also, everyone is to clean all surfaces when done in the laundry room. We still run into each other often so we can chat from a distance. I can't see my grandchildren now, who used to come over all the time, so I have been loaning out some of their toys and books,



*Plucking basil leaves for semi-annual Pesto Festo, Takoma Village Cohousing.*

Sharon Villines

for the duration, to help our community children have a little more to do. School will be beginning online tomorrow so that should help. We also have been passing around humorous things that have been going around the internet re. coronavirus, sheltering in place, etc.

**From: Bonnie Fergusson (Swans Market Cohousing, Oakland, California)**

**Date: Sun, 22 Mar 2020**

At Swans Market we have canceled Common Dinners, upped our cleaning protocols, and are having all our meetings via videoconferencing via Zoom. Our younger neighbors have organized a twice weekly shopping run so that we elders can just email in our list of needs and they shop for us. At 7 pm every night we stand in our doorways (which are 18 feet apart) and clap to thank our medical folk and first responders and then we all sing a song together, different one every night. Solidarity in a time of social distancing. A few days ago we learned that one of our original members who had cancer and so moved to an assisted living facility had died; so we gathered in our communal garden which she had lovingly tended for 19 years, and standing six feet apart we sang her favorite song and shared memories of her and toasted her with Lemoncello which she used to make, in memory of her fabulous cocktail party she used to throw every year. When one of our younger members turned three we stood in our doorways and sang Happy Birthday to her. It feels strange but we still feel connected and are caring for each other. As far as we know none of us has yet got the virus, but who knows so we try to assume we all have it.

**From: Sharon Villines (Takoma Village Cohousing, Washington, DC)**

**Date: Mon, 23 Mar 2020**

We have a team that organizes this including a doctor of food hygiene (or a related field I have forgotten), a PhD in theoretical chemistry, and a graduate of West Point. I don't know the specialities of the other members.

All gatherings including meals and meetings, large or small, have been canceled. We are all learning Zoom. The Zoom membership meeting has more attendees than any we can remember—I think the final number was 37. In households with two adults, they shared a connection. We had one person facilitating, one person doing tech support, and a third person watching the chat and conveying questions and requests to the facilitator. All microphones muted. We used the "hand raised" feature for those who wanted to speak.



Richard Getler

Rocky Hill Cohousing.

The guest rooms are closed.

The kids' room has been stripped of all hard to clean toys. Caregivers have to disinfect when leaving.

Common House surfaces that are likely to have been touched were heavily wiped down with soap or sanitizer last week and then are wiped again every day. People coming and going are asked to wipe down surfaces they touch including door knobs.

Use of the small laundry room is being coordinated to stagger use. There are often traffic jams and it would be impossible to keep a six foot distance from anything.

Social distancing all around. People are self-quarantining for the most part—some completely if they think they have any exposure or are in a vulnerable population.

We have a wonderful guy, Herb, who is making regular runs to the co-op. When others are going shopping they put out a message and people can contact them with their list. So far I think every request has been filled. Herb and Mark are very fast on offering aid of any kind.

Community sing last Friday—musicians in the piazza and people on the two stories of walkways above. Planned as a regular event.

### Stay protected and connected during these times

**From: Ron Ingram**

**Date: Wed, 3 Jun 2020**

Just wanted to connect with this community during these strange times we are living in. How is the cohousing community protecting each other? Happy that the looting has not reached residential areas. But also sad to see the violence that has happened. Does anyone think there will be a major "flight" from the more populated urban areas as a result of this? If so, how will that affect those in rural areas?

**From: Liz Magill (Mosaic Commons, Berlin, Massachusetts)**

**Date: Wed, 3 Jun 2020**

Interesting question. I'm more concerned about how to stand with my siblings of color and less concerned with being protected. My community is pretty securely protected by our race and our wealth. (Both from violence and from COVID-19.)

We are starting study groups of the book *Me and White Supremacy*. And letting each other know about situations where we can protest. Discussing which events are encour-

aging masks, and the like.

Also, one great outgrowth of the wonderful heart conference last weekend is a cohousing discussion group on racial diversity. I expect we will hear more from that group soon.

I also would love to stay connected and hear how other communities are caring for their cities. We are far from the city so we haven't been able to provide more direct support.

Another round of white flight would certainly be an unfortunate outcome. I feel some amount of regret to not live in the city. What do others feel?

**From: Ron Ingram**

**Date: Thu, 4 Jun 2020**

I am an African American woman originally from the south.

Before I am a race, I am human. Why does it take a violent protest to care about each other? Maybe the protest against police brutality is needed but can we get to the root of it and protest wealth inequality and housing inequality?

Before I stand outside protesting police brutality, I would rather have a home or true financial freedom. Let's talk about the origin of the banking system, our first currency, protest the private entity called the Federal Reserve. Let's get to the root and stop railing against the symptoms.

Humans, need to be free, not just people of color. Humanity needs to be freed from the bonds of capitalistic greed.

The last march Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. organized was called the Poor People's Campaign. This was the real protest that him killed because as long as he was marching for blacks' rights, an easily divisive issue, he was fine. As soon as he started to gather all of humanity to fight capitalistic greed and subsequently poverty, they killed him before the protests and marches could begin. If you wanna know more, read his book on it.

Race is such an easy divisive issue. Let's unite on a real front, the fight against capitalistic greed and the banking system that has made us all slaves regardless of color.

Young women of color like me, and also non-POC, all need housing. I don't protest in the streets because my life is a protest. I gave up paying rent about three years ago and started living in my truck until a family

from the cohousing community invited me to live with them, rent free.

Be the protest, live the protest. As the nation opens back up, they are predicting more home foreclosures and evictions, bating us with a stimulus check to keep us on the banking system because they know that we the people are the true currency. I dare some of us to stand in solidarity with our poor or out-of-work brothers whether black or white and refuse to pay your rent, refuse to pay mortgage. If some of can't pay for housing, none of us will pay for housing. I dare you to help fix up a boarded-up abandoned house free of charge and find a family to live in it. I dare you. That's a real protest, when we band together and create lasting change in our community.

Beautify our landscapes free of charge. Turn old schools into homes free of charge. Turn old retail stores into housing free of charge instead of looting them.

I. Dare. You.

## George Floyd movement and cohousing

**From: Ann Lehman (Cohousing Association Board of Directors)**

**Date: Fri, 5 Jun 2020**

The recent murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis spurred marches calling for racial justice. This call aligns with our cohousing movement that values all people and embraces diversity.

The Cohousing Association stands firmly in support of people of color and anti-racist allies. We hope that the skills we build within our communities for deep listening and productive working together can be applied in our neighborhoods and cities to support those who are struggling to be heard. "Diversity" is a value commonly included in cohousing mission statements. Figuring out ways to make it happen requires difficult conversations, which are essential as we strive to do better.

Following last week's "Heart of Community" online cohousing conference, a large group of attendees convened to discuss what cohousers and their communities can do to provide support for racial justice in their cities and towns. We also have members who have specialized in these areas for years and we

hope to hear more from them.

We encourage all cohousing communities to have this challenging conversation.

CoHousers for Racial Justice: [www.facebook.com/groups/cohousersforracialjustice](https://www.facebook.com/groups/cohousersforracialjustice)

## Common meals during COVID-19

**From: Pat Looney-Burman (La Querencia, a.k.a. Fresno Cohousing, Fresno, California)**

**Date: Mon, 8 Jun 2020**

Three or four households have implemented what we call "Front Porch Dinners." One of the households has had "Bryan's Bakery" on three separate Sunday mornings, with homemade bagels one week, a variety of muffins another, and a variety of scones the third.

My husband and I provided a "picnic" for Memorial Day, and we've also hosted a brunch and a dinner. The menus are simple: food that can be easily served, and usually consist of only three or four items or less.

The guidelines are that the meals/food are served on the hosts' front porch. My husband has built two "sneeze shields" (which we loan to others) that fit on small rectangular tables on our front porch. There is a half-hour window for those who have signed up to come get their food. Participants bring their own dishes and maintain a six foot distance from each other, as they line up on the sidewalk, waiting their turn. When their turn comes, they come up our walk to the serving table, holding their plates, as we serve the food with our own serving utensils. Participants then go to their own front porches or inside their homes to eat.

It has worked well! Not everyone has chosen to participate, which is fine. We do enjoy seeing more than one neighbor at a time. To date, no one (knock on wood and anything else!) has been sick in our 28-home community.

## Cohousing in the time of COVID-19 and good news too!

**From: Charles Durrett (Nevada City Cohousing, Nevada City, California)**

**Date: Fri, 19 Jun 2020**

*The Blue Hour Drumming Circle at Nevada City Cohousing (Ways to Create Community During COVID-19)...*

You need to build strong healthy relationships in good times, so you are ready for times such as these. And preferably relationships in a community that is very proximate—like a village; common dinners, common workdays, common problems to solve, common gardening, book clubs, yoga, and just plain discussing the issues of the day, you know, old-fashioned village making, so when the s\*\*t hits the fan, like COVID-19, community is in place! At Nevada City Cohousing, we plan to get together each night at 7 pm to drum, even if it's on the bottom of a five gallon plastic bucket, though we do have a great rhythm section with real drums! We meet each other at the



Richard Getler

circle, drum, and then say goodnight after we are done, which is particularly important to those who live alone. Social distancing, not social isolation!

Nevada City Cohousing exercises extreme caution sheltering in place. In recent weeks, we have begun having meetings in a 20 foot round outdoor circle, about 7.5 feet away from each other in the circumference, even sharing a few common meals in the outdoor distancing circle. And thus we create some continuity in community, each day; to do yoga around the pool, plant the summer gardens, and connect through group circle drumming just before dark at the “blue hour” when moods can easily turn blue, and sometimes do.

### Care team

**From: Yochai Gal**

**Date: Fri, 24 Jul 2020**

Our community created “clusters” of six households each. We each got an email address and a WhatsApp group. We use that to check in with each other on a frequent basis. However, after a while folks broke into bubbles where they were able to be closer physically, so it sort of stopped.

**From: Grace Kim (Capitol Hill Urban Cohousing, Seattle, Washington)**

**Date: Sun, 26 Jul 2020**

Capitol Hill Urban Cohousing (CHUC) has been living together in the same building for four years. And while we had a community life team, and people were organically checking in during meals and other social events pre-Covid, we decided post-Covid to be really intentional about this.

We don't have a committee per se. When our “stay home” orders went into effect in Washington state (early March), we were meeting twice weekly via Zoom. After a couple of months we went to weekly, and a month and half after that, we went to monthly (which was our normal cadence). During the weekly meetings, we did two to three

check-ins where we simply went in rounds and discussed how we were feeling. It was helpful/useful to understand the level of anxiety we were each experiencing around COVID-19, job/financial situations, safety/security around the building/neighborhood with occupied protests outside our doors. I should note that there are only nine households (17 adults)—all of us participate at meetings, but that is only 17 people to do a full round—so it's manageable to do that one to two times within a two-hour meeting.

We also started a “community support fund” during that time—a pot of money that only the treasurer has knowledge of. Anonymous donations could be made to the fund. And households could request money from the fund (no questions asked). The intent was that if anyone was experiencing financial hardships, there was a safety net without questions asked. The treasurer was tasked with reporting the balance of the fund on a regular basis so people knew whether it needed replenishing, or if there were any funds that could be requested.

I think it wouldn't hurt for a larger community to have a team/point person to do this check-in on a regular basis.

Or you could go to a buddy system (pair up households)—so if someone is experiencing a hardship that requires community support, but doesn't feel comfortable asking directly, they could talk to their buddy household—who could manage the ask/coordination of services for the family. For example, a family may have a member who has an extreme medical condition and needs support for meals and rides to the hospital. The buddy household could coordinate a list of volunteers for rides and meals and check in with family regularly to report back to community about additional requests or to give status updates. This could relieve the family needing support from a lot of unnecessary email/conversation during this stressful time.

### Making policy during COVID and COVID transitions

**From: Fern Selzer (New Brighton Cohousing, Aptos, California)**

**Date: Thu, 3 Sep 2020**

Our community, New Brighton Co-



*Move-in day at Heartwood Cohousing.*

Sandy Thomson

housing in Aptos, California has recently been transitioning into more usage of the common house, after many months of minimal usage. We are also having more community activities. I am imagining that we will need to keep gradually transitioning and changing our usage rules. I am wondering how we can have a more fluid approach to policy change that actually works and does not burden people with too many emails and conversations, etc.

We have been making decisions by the whole community, which has made any transitions really slow. So...some people had loosened up in anticipation as things felt safer, while others were careful to follow the rules until formally changed, which led to some bad feelings between those groups. Other discomforts were for those with preexisting conditions or older; not trusting that rules are being followed by others caused them to be more withdrawn or reluctant to participate in community activities.

I'm thinking you are all having similar issues to navigate and I request any thoughts or suggestions.

**From: Mac Thomson (Heartwood Cohousing, Bayfield, Colorado)**

**Date: Fri, 4 Sep 2020**

In a word, Delegation.

Our Teams agreement ([www.heartwoodcohousing.com/teams.html](http://www.heartwoodcohousing.com/teams.html)) spells out specific responsibilities and authorities for each team, but when there's a gray area about which team or the whole community has authority to make various decisions, our Steering team is authorized to decide. That was the case for pandemic management. I don't know why we didn't see that one coming.

So the Steering team decided that our Common House team will be responsible for deciding on reopening policies for the common house. As with all team decisions, they post an agenda to the community before their meeting so community members can offer input and attend the meeting if they'd like.

Because Covid cautiousness varies greatly amongst our members, the Common House team has tried to keep more required activities, like picking up your mail from the mailroom, as safe as possible. Other more optional activities,



Richard Getler

like outdoor potlucks, may not be quite as safe, but because they are optional, members who are more Covid cautious don't attend or they bring their own food and sit farther apart.

**From: Liz Magill (Mosaic Commons, Berlin, Massachusetts, where we have no cases but the next town over is a hot spot)**

**Date: Fri, 4 Sep 2020**

We have not made any Covid rules. The idea pops up but no one has made a proposal to come to consensus on.

Our common house was never closed—several people need it for work as they try to find quiet places for meetings with a house full of kids.

The fitness team did change to having folk sign-up to use the space, and one family at high risk has asked that everyone wear a mask even if alone in the mailroom/hub. As best I can tell folk are following that.

Another person asked for people to sign up for even casual common house uses; this allows others to decide if the space is safe for them.

Meals team recently instituted an optional “eat-in” choice for meals—only a few people do this and mostly outside on the porch.

Everyone follows the mask if you are closer than six feet, avoid large groups guidelines most of the time.

I was assisting a parent with a temper tantrum the other day and asked the child if I could take off my mask. They paused the tantrum to say clearly, “No! Covid,” before continuing the tantrum. So I guess we are doing okay.

• • •

To repeat the words of Charles Durrett, “You need to build strong healthy relationships in good times, so you are ready for times such as these.” If there is a silver lining to the pandemic, it is that it has brought to the fore the importance of community and relationships. Through drum circles to porch dinners to demonstrations of solidarity with Black Lives Matter, cohousing communities reaffirm their ideals and survive. 🐦

---

*Indra Waters is the Senior Acquisitions Editor for the literary magazine Open Ceilings, which is run and published in Davis, California, and a new volunteer with COMMUNITIES. He also studies English at University of California, Davis as well as tutors English at Sierra College, California.*

# A Cooperative Option for Seniors in the Age of COVID-19

By Deborah Altus



*Raised-bed gardens at the Co-op.*

People residing in senior living communities represent a demographic that has been hard hit by COVID-19. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, those age 85 and above are 13 times more likely to be hospitalized and 630 times more likely to die than young adults age 18 to 29 (see [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-age.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-age.html)). The terrible dilemma faced by many adult care home residents in the time of COVID-19 is that in order to stay alive and well they must avoid human contact—the very thing that gives life meaning. With this point in mind, this article looks at how a Senior Housing Co-op is faring during the pandemic through the eyes of one member, referred to as Sally<sup>1</sup>.

Unlike many shared living arrangements for older people (e.g., retirement communities, assisted living facilities, nursing homes), housing cooperatives fit the definition of an intentional community proposed by Tim Miller<sup>2</sup>. Consisting of more than five adults not related by blood or marriage, the members fi-

nancially participate by owning shares in the co-op, live in the same or adjoining buildings, and share a vision—manifested through cooperative legal, economic, and governmental structures—and a sense of common purpose. Situated in a midwestern college town of around 100,000 people, this senior housing co-op includes 52 one- and two-bedroom apartments in a large multi-story building and has about 75 residents, with membership limited to people age 62 and older and their partners.

Sally is a Caucasian woman in her early 70s who is healthy and active. She is a retired professional who was living in an older single-family home that she maintained herself. She said she loved her former home but not the burdens of home ownership and the increasing weight of material possessions. She purposefully sought a housing arrangement that would provide a strong sense of community, as she wanted to live around people she knew and who cared about one another. Living in a corporate-owned retirement community didn't interest her. Sally had had decades of experience as a member of a food co-op, and as a result the co-op model was familiar and appealing. She says that the members are a diverse group of people, but they are united by having made the decision to live in a senior housing co-op—a decision that shows that they value community and have similar attitudes about how they want to grow old.

While Sally was looking for a tight-knit community of friends and has enjoyed being involved in group activities and service to the co-op, she also loves solitude and appreciates the fact that you can choose your level of involvement in the co-op. She was grateful to find a unit on the top floor that faces away from the front door and with stairs nearby to the parking garage so that she can come and go unobtrusively.

She is spending more time indoors due to the pandemic, but the co-op building makes that easier because it was designed to let in much light and to capitalize on outdoor views. Individual units have balconies and Sally loves to sit and read on her balcony in the morning and feel a connection to the natural world. The location of her unit has turned out to be especially advantageous during the pandemic, as the nearby stairs allow her to limit her face-to-face contact with others. Although many members

1. Note: in this interview, Sally is speaking for herself, not for the co-op.

2. Miller, Tim, "A Matter of Definition: Just What Is an Intentional Community?," *Communal Societies*, 30 (1), 2010, 1-15.

are what gerontologists call “young old” (age 65-75), Sally realizes that she and other members are nevertheless at an age that is associated with an increase in chronic diseases and greater vulnerability to acute illnesses such as pneumonia and flu—and, of course, COVID-19.

Despite the vulnerability of members to the virus, Sally reports that the co-op has navigated the pandemic relatively well. In fact, she agrees with a fellow member who remarked that “if the pandemic had to happen, this is the best place for it to happen.” That same man added, “Together, we will overcome.” She attributes this result to two main factors: the bonds that members formed before the pandemic hit and the joint ownership that has required members to stay in contact. She reports that friends of hers who live independently in single-family homes have been much more alone in the pandemic.

When initial stay-at-home orders were enacted to curb the spread of the pandemic, members took matters into their own hands. For example, they formed teams to disinfect surfaces in common areas, developed policies to limit visitors inside the building, and several members pulled out sewing machines and began making face masks for anyone in the building who needed one.

Sally appreciates being surrounded by a supportive community even though she has limited her involvement in face-to-face gatherings, taking part in virtual activities instead. She created a listserv for the co-op to promote virtual communication and she is responsible for maintaining it—something that keeps her connected with the membership. The contributions to the listserv range from important policy issues to more mundane comments on daily life and even jokes to lighten the mood. One member made a presentation on the co-op library and how to use it. Reports of hummingbird sightings, descriptions of walks and bike rides, and other anecdotes from members’ daily life that fill their virtual communication are welcome reminders to Sally that she is part of a cohesive community despite the pandemic. Simply knowing that people are nearby has been comforting to her, and she believes that the community will become increasingly important in her life as she grows older.

One reason that the co-op has remained cohesive during the pandemic is that its practices have reflected a distinction between the concepts of physical and social distancing. While staying a safe distance apart from others is stressed, social interaction and caring for others is encouraged in a safe way. Some of the social events—book clubs, bridge club, men’s and women’s coffee groups, puzzle tables, and other activities that had become a staple of co-op life before the pandemic—have continued with masks and physical distancing. Business meetings are conducted in person

in the commons. Gardening groups can work outside together, and a Tai Chi group has moved from an indoor to an outdoor area.

Several members sent information from the CDC and State Health Department to members about measures to reduce exposure to the virus, and they agreed that these sources would be good to follow. Masks are required at the co-op, although Sally reports that they are not universally worn. A safety committee dispenses safety information but Sally says that not even all the members of this committee have been consistent about wearing masks. This is a serious concern to her and has caused her to reduce trips into common areas of the co-op. She did attend the annual co-op membership meeting in May, but sat in back and didn’t interact with anyone. Despite her

---

**The co-op appears to have fared well despite potentially serious threats to its operations during a pandemic.**

---



*Sally reading on her balcony at the Co-op*



*One of several tables holding sanitizing supplies.*

Photos courtesy of Deborah Altus

concern about inconsistent mask wearing, she says that this issue has not caused a rift in the co-op. Rather, she says that members simply choose the level of interaction with which they are comfortable. She adds that although members' approaches to the pandemic have been somewhat different, they haven't been different enough to cause serious problems.

Besides inconsistent mask use, another issue that has bothered Sally is the use of disposable wipes, large quantities of which are used on a regular basis to sanitize common areas. She finds this hard to stomach, and it raises the question of whether this issue might represent a fundamental values clash between members who are trying to reduce their ecological footprint versus those for whom this is not a priority. But for now, this issue remains a minor problem.

The extent to which the co-op appears to have fared well is somewhat surprising given that there are a number of potentially serious threats to co-op operations during a pandemic. Members are in a high-risk age group. Physical distancing is difficult in a situation where members live in the same building, and where interaction is needed for shared governance. And even though Sally reports that bonds among members are strong, these bonds are nevertheless relatively new (the building was not occupied until 2019, though planning had started four years earlier). The virus is a high-stakes issue for older people. Together, these threats have the potential to set the co-op up for bitter

disputes about pandemic policies and procedures.

Nevertheless, Sally's description of the co-op during the pandemic suggests that these threats have been buffered by the way in which the co-op's ownership structure promotes holistic wellness. Dimensions of wellness, including emotional, social, environmental, physical, and intellectual wellness, are addressed by opportunities to socialize, play, work, and study together—even when these activities are virtual. Occupational wellness is addressed by opportunities to serve on committees and the board. Financial wellness is addressed by sharing material resources and financial ownership of the co-op. And spiritual wellness is addressed by a having a common vision that promotes a sense of meaning and purpose in life.

Additional conditions may serve as protective factors for this co-op during the pandemic. Co-op members come from a similar demographic—i.e., a similar age group, socioeconomic status, race and ethnic background, and geographic background—a situation that may help with decision making and community cohesion. Members are the “young old,” and probably more involved in co-op operations than they might be a decade from now—and they are statistically less vulnerable than older cohorts to serious consequences from the virus. Individuals have self-selected co-op membership, suggesting that cooperation and community are important values. The co-op may be in a honeymoon period when everything is fresh and exciting given that it is only in its second year of operation.

Moreover, unlike some intentional communities, the co-op doesn't share meals, thereby avoiding a practice that could be a dangerous super-spreader activity. Potluck meals and big parties have not taken place during the pandemic, although small groups sometimes gather on a patio. The co-op doesn't rely on a common business or a steady stream of visitors for income—undoubtedly making operations easier during the pandemic.

Yet it is the sense of community spirit and connectedness that appears to be sustaining the co-op and allowing its members to weather the pandemic more effectively than those living on the outside. The co-op member's comment that “if the pandemic had to happen, this is the best place for it to happen” may speak for many intentional communities in the time of COVID-19. 🌱

---

*Deborah Altus has been involved for many years in the Foundation for Intentional Community and the Communal Studies Association, and she currently sits on the Board of the International Communal Studies Association. She is a professor in the Family and Human Services Department at Washburn University, Topeka, Kansas, where she coordinates the gerontology minor. This article is adapted from a presentation given at the Communal Studies Association conference held virtually October 1-3, 2020.*



*The Co-op garden late in the season.*



*A sign on an outside door of the Co-op.*



# Pursuing a Community Dream

By Rachael Love Cohen



Photos courtesy of Rachael Love Cohen

I gaze across the expansive backyard, taking in the four-stall pole barn, our affectionate donkey, and our obstinate horse grazing nearby. A long row of majestic live oaks delineates the property line a few acres away. The Spanish moss that hangs from them, like strings of pearls adorning each distinguished belle, extends quintessential southern hospitality and charm. I am comforted by their regal tranquility.

Sudden shrieks of laughter draw my attention from the trees. My children, 13, 8, and 5, are chasing after our chickens, ineffectively—though joyously—attempting to herd them into their coop as our mischievous dog surveys the scene with curiosity, then saunters off to go sniff around the garden, then the garage...then far off into the front field, as he holds his nose high up into the air and breathes in deeply.

This tableau is brand new for me. For all of us.

Until two months ago, we were urban dwellers, cultivating kale in a tower garden on our back patio and walking our dog twice a day around the neighborhood sidewalks. Like rodents in a cage, our existence was contained. Now my husband rides his mower up and down our property for hours and there is always still more grass to cut, more fallen branches to be collected, more weeds to be pulled, more rows to be planted. Our family has traded the toxic HOA herbicides and pesticides for unending red ant bites and the freedom to to be bitten. We're grateful that the myriad electromagnetic fields from countless smart meters and wifi routers in our townhome community are replaced by swarms of eardrum-piercing cicadas in this new rural landscape.

For our first 16 years of marriage, we'd reluctantly been living side-by-side the rat race. Though never actually participating in it, we'd found it nearly impossible to escape its impact on our lives. The pace, the loneliness, the disconnected routine of daily life all seeped insidiously into our lived human experience.

When our first child was two years old, I'd had enough;

enough of the burden of motherhood in the context of a nuclear family living far from our own families of origin. I looked around—in my faith-based community, in my neighborhood, at other lonely mothers—and I became frightened by what I saw. I observed an entire generation of human beings struggling to engage in mutually beneficial social support; trying and failing, relentlessly, in a sea of broken systems. I felt immediately motivated to find, or design, an alternative to this ostensibly hopeless outlook.

After an exhaustive multi-week Google search, I turned up new concepts named “cohousing,” “ecovillage,” and “intentional community.” I learned that these alternative communities offer a way to strengthen and repair the individual, the family, and society by bringing back a traditional framework of mutual support that is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve in the modern world. With swiftly intensifying hope and enthusiasm, I discovered that the physical design of these communities encourages frequent contact and interaction between neighbors, offering not only social, but also economic, environmental, and safety benefits. My immediate reaction? “Where do I sign up?”

Over the course of the next 10 years, I shleppe<sup>d</sup> my family around with me to sample communities as if we were tasting fine wines. Actually, the similarity was uncanny, really. A wine-tasting guide I once read said, “Tasting wine doesn't have to be an exercise in snobbery. It only takes a brief pause to develop awareness... Knowing what you like will make it much easier to consistently find what you are looking for.”

As a student of mindfulness, I found my awareness refined and I knew just what I was looking for.

I needed my community to be in Florida. I needed it to be rural and on a large parcel of land. I needed it to be a diverse, intergenerational eco-community with the intention of social, economic, and ecological sustainability. I needed a low-impact way of life, walkability, and active and deliberate social partici-



pation. I needed ample opportunities to develop deep, authentic relationships based on shared values such as environmental stewardship and sustainability, health and wellness, mind-body care and consciousness, personal growth, spirituality, the right to autonomy and personal freedoms, and a commitment to alternative farming, animals, and sustainable food production.

*But wait. There's more.* There needed to be a component devoted to the children. We are living through a time in history when bureaucratic notions of “benchmarking for success” and “educational standards” are prioritized over developmentally appropriate, play-based learning in the younger years, and divergent thinking and project-based, hands-on learning in the older grades. I wanted not only to build an intentional *living* community to meet my adult needs, but also an intentional *learning* community for our youngest communitarians. And so blossomed forth my vision for the Good Earth School.

At the Good Earth School we believe all children have a birthright to a nature-based, hands-on, developmentally appropriate, child-led education. We honor, respect, and encourage the natural unfolding of childhood, and we will strive to embody a culture of continual learning and growth for our community members of all ages. We value the earth as our greatest teacher. Our program will follow the innate wisdom of the rhythms and lessons of the natural world. All children need to move, to explore, to take risks. They need to understand how they fit into the greater landscape of their world. They must know the history of the land on which they live in order to honor it. They must gain access to the minute-to-minute magic their ecosystem creates in order to revere it. All children must be welcomed to discern and hone their sensory awareness, their physical capabilities, and their inner consciousness. And to that end, it is our responsibility as the adults in their lives to offer them the opportunity to slow down, root down, and thrive through a whole-body, holistic education.

The community of my dreams, replete with this idyllic learn-

ing philosophy, did not yet exist in Florida, or anywhere else for that matter! So I began to develop my own mission, vision, and goals and turned my attention to creating community instead of joining it. I held meetings. I gave presentations. I hosted weekend retreats. I chaired a 200 person conference! My intention and intensity was unyielding. My optimism and ambition never dimmed. People expressed their enthusiasm and support. Parents were ecstatic over our educational model. But I couldn't seem to cultivate a core group of individuals willing to actively commit themselves to the undertaking. Finally I hit a wall.

My oldest child was now in middle school. Two more of my children had been born without the loving hands of community shepherding them into the world. I'd missed over a decade's worth of the distinctly intentional connection and support I so desperately craved. I looked at all the puzzle pieces in front of me and, distraught, still could not figure out how to put them together to build the intentional community of my dreams.

Cue COVID. March 2020 arrived. The Great Shutdown began. Our local playgrounds were cordoned off; our beaches closed; our city, state, and national parks and open spaces became inaccessible to the public. I looked out the window from my own home and gazed across the street at our community park and playground. The children's equipment and park entrances had been wrapped in glaring yellow caution tape that read “**CRIME SCENE—DO NOT CROSS.**”

“It's time,” I heard myself whisper. “It's time to take the leap.” In that singular moment, all the years of growing indignation and aggravation with the status quo came to a head. I understood that my calling was not just to carry the vision, but to implement it. I was not meant only to be an inspired voice, but to serve as a catalyst and driver for desperately needed social innovation. Yes, Gandhi, I get it. *I must be the change I wish to see in the world.* I'll just have to start out small and grow it until I achieve the dream.

That night my husband and I looked at a map of Florida (for

literally the 200th time) to narrow down a location. Suddenly, an area of North-Central Florida that we had not noticed before came into perfect clarity—surrounded 360 degrees by a national forest, state forests and parks, natural springs, conservation and wildlife management areas, a national wildlife refuge, and no industrial agriculture in the vicinity. We knew we'd found our sanctuary. We located four suitable properties and made appointments to see them later that week.

We drove the four hours north and struck out on all four homes. Mold. Not enough sun for growing. Too old. Too small.

"You must know of another..." I entreated the realtor.

"Well," she paused, "They have taken it off the market because of...the 'situation' right now...but...maybe they would be willing to let you see it." She made the call and we received a hesitant but affirmative green light. We drove over immediately and it was love at first sight.

Located in DeLeon Springs, Florida, we now own a five acre property one mile from a natural spring. It is fenced and cleared with rolling pastures and scattered with towering live oaks. In addition to the four-stall horse barn and tack room that were already there, we have built a chicken coop and large run, started a small kitchen garden, and turned the pool into a completely chemical-free swimming experience with the new cavitation filter technology.

But all of these improvements pale in comparison to our more lofty goals. There is a second smaller guest house on the property where we are inviting our new farm manager, WWOOFers, and a part-time school facilitator to live as they help us bring Sweet Land Eco-Community and the Good Earth School to fruition. We have crafted the farm manager position as a long-term role for someone who is interested in collaboratively building a thriving business operation from the ground up while enjoying the camaraderie of like-minded community. We are more interested in getting started than getting it perfect and trust that the natural evolution of the farm, along with our shared commitment and intention, will lead us to the creation of a robust framework that brings us all alive.

The 1,000 square foot dwelling will also serve as our school building. There are more than four acres of land available for farming, animal care, and outdoor exploration, as well as a location to offer classes such as yoga and mindfulness, nature art, handcrafts and traditional skills, healthy cooking, music, martial arts, native species, wild edibles, permaculture, and horseback riding. There are numerous climbing trees, and long-term plans to build a zip line, tree house, natural playscape with repurposed materials, and giant trampoline.

In addition to the farm and the learning community, we are working on developing a place-based eco-community. We have



already begun hosting gatherings and look forward to many more with a focus on environmentalism, personal freedoms, spiritual ecology, and sustainable living.

Is this success?

If my children's daily jubilation and monumental improvement in health are any measure of victory, then we've not only hit a home run, we've won the game. Truly, we could not have imagined a better outcome for them. Moving away from the cell tower across the street, as well as the pollution from the international airport, interstate highway, and light rail train tracks encircling our neighborhood, was the best decision we've ever made. The headaches, stomachaches, aggression, irritability, and brain fog have lifted for all three of my kids. As a completely unexpected consequence of building my dream community, my children are now healing, blossoming, and thriving in their new rural location, and for the first time in our lives, we are all able to enjoy a truly harmonious, nourishing family life together.

And am I satisfied personally?

I'm feeling a bit disoriented, to be honest. I notice that I'm often at a loss for an appropriate gauge, measure, or definition of personal satisfaction in this new, uncharted territory. Though my consciously-chosen values are deeply and personally meaningful to me, they seem to have somewhat less sway over my sense of happiness than my cultural conditioning. To my chagrin, so much of my self-talk is still a reflection of lived experiences within my family of origin, the educational systems that processed me, and my peer groups as an adolescent and young adult. It's unsettling how the entrenched narratives around us have such a strong impact on our ability to discern our own sense of fulfillment.

I'm striving daily to experience what I now have as what I've been wanting, and there's also so much more I haven't attained that feels essential to my well-being. I still need a larger, more robust intentional community around me. I need to not hold the ongoing responsibility, alone, of creating the container of

community. I need to share the burdens and the blessings of that role with others.

What will I do about it?

Employ a three-to-five-year plan to execute the vision I've held since that lengthy Google search in 2009: a rural cohousing-ecovillage hybrid with at least a dozen family units on 50 acres minimally. My mission? To rebuild a sense of shared humanity through cooperative living. My vision? To form a collective of people who are consciously committed to creating a diverse, intergenerational eco-community, with the intention of social, economic, and ecological sustainability. And my goals? A supportive social environment, a low-impact way of life, walkability, active and deliberate social participation, health and wellness, mind-body care and consciousness, and strengthening of the individual, the family, and society. I will work to bring individuals and families together in our area and will support them in getting to know each other by continuing to offer regular gatherings at our property. These gatherings will build trust and friendship through consistent interaction. After a few years, a core group of like-minded folks committed to our community vision will "take the leap," buy land together, and nurture a fledgling intentional community into being.

My dream community is not yet "here," but it is significantly closer than it ever has been. 🐦

---

*Rachael Love Cohen has a deep passion for mobilizing grassroots social activism at the local, state, and national levels. She has always been a big-picture thinker, captivated by social systems and large-scale social change. She believes deeply in the process of community-building as a means to remedy social disintegration and to repair individual well-being. Rachael has a masters degree in community practice social work and nonprofit management from the University at Albany. Connect with the projects described in this article via their Facebook groups: @Sweet Land Eco-Community and @The Good Earth School.*



# From Five Earths to One, Part Three: Transforming Our Economy

By Jan Spencer

For Parts One and Two of this article, see COMMUNITIES #187 and #188.

## U nlearn

One of my favorite tracks by Bob Dylan is from his *Slow Train Coming* album. He's singing about himself wanting to become a better person and to do that, he declares a lot of what he needs to do is unlearn.

When I was in public elementary school in Texas, circa 1965, we were taught our country was so prosperous because Americans are exceptional in their capacity to dream big and work hard. Besides prayer at lunchtime, we were taught the song "Texas, Our Texas." One stanza and refrain are enough to illustrate social engineering in the classroom of a public school.

Texas, Our Texas! All hail the mighty State!  
Texas, Our Texas! So wonderful so great!  
Boldest and grandest, withstanding ev'ry test,  
O Empire wide and glorious, you stand supremely blest.  
God bless you Texas! And keep you brave and strong,  
That you may grow in power and worth, throughout the ages long.

We were taught and required to sing an anthem to market capitalism. For me in my innocence, this was early in the process of being on the receiving end of one of history's most effective examples of social, cultural, and lifestyle engineering. In our Land of the Free, at Arthur Kramer Elementary School, in a well-off suburban neighborhood with lots of maids and swimming pools in north Dallas, the kids are being educated to believe our economic system is the best possible, that it equates to democracy, and that excess consumption and vanity are virtuous.

I am sure just about everyone can reflect on their own version of this experience. And of course, that social engineering doesn't stop. Refresher courses are with us all day long. The average American is exposed to hundreds of commercial messages every day. There have never been so many compelling reasons to unlearn a lifetime of consumer culture social engineering.

Market capitalism essentially controls the way we think and live. Perhaps the most remarkable product of this economic system is the success it has had in degrading individuals' and society's capacity to imagine and create alternatives.

We all have time and money. How we manage our time and money means the difference between a viable future and a dead end. The more people making smart choices with their time and money, the better. Participation in the economic system is not a package deal. We can pick

and choose. Capitalism has provided us with many tools for its own replacement.

The priority goal for our society, at this point in history, should be to create a society and economic system that bring out the best in positive human potential and exist within the boundaries of the natural world. But first, it's important to look at the essential problems of the system we currently have:

**Problem #1: Externalized costs.** Market capitalism as we know it cannot exist without externalizing the cost of virtually every product and service it has to sell.

An external cost is damage caused to people and planet that is not accounted for in the price paid for a product. One of the primary claims of capitalism is the magic of the market. Give people the choice of competing products and let people choose. The cheap prices made possible by external costs deprive people of the chance to make an informed choice what to buy. The price paid for almost every product in the store is dishonest because it doesn't represent the true story

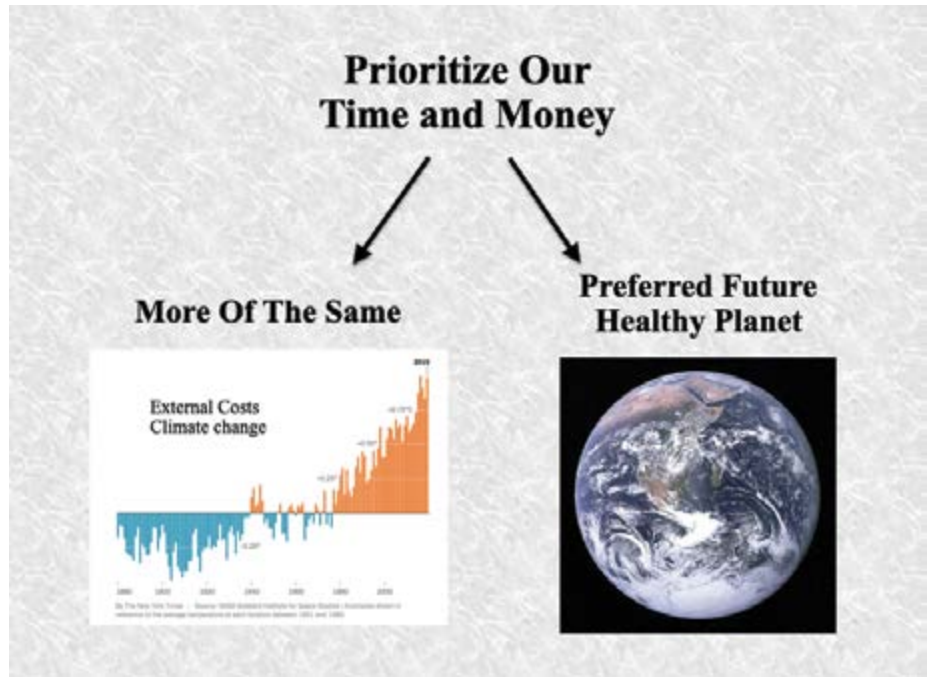


Images courtesy of Jan Spencer

---

**As the virus shows, Americans can be impatient, undisciplined, susceptible to inaccurate information—and can also make uninvited changes to adapt.**

---



of the product's life cycle—extraction, manufacture, use, and disposal.

External costs damage public health, they damage the environment, they contribute to the corruption of our political system. Here are several good examples of external costs:

*Oil:* Looking for oil and extracting it, either conventional or fracking, typically damages the environment and often degrades the well-being of the people who live where the oil is located. Moving the crude—by pipeline, train, ship—has a history of costly accidents. Combustion in a car engine causes air and water pollution which damages habitat and public health.

Every year, cars kill over 40,000 people in the US and cause hundreds of billions in property damage. When you buy a gallon of gas, you do not pay for all that damage. Public well-being pays and the natural world pays. If the cost of all the damage to people and planet caused by oil showed up in the price, various educated guesses for the cost of a gallon of gasoline range from \$15 to \$100 a gallon.

*Meat* has an enormous external cost—feedlots pollute water and air. Confined feeding operations are cruel to animals. Feedlots require factory farming which leads to soil erosion, more water and air pollution, and a dead zone at the mouth of the Mississippi River. Meat consumed at levels typical of most Americans produces many kinds of disease that cost society hundreds of billions of dollars every year. The price of a burger ignores those problems.

*Passive entertainment* with its hundreds of billions of hours of unproductive time can be considered an external cost because those lost hours could have been used instead for all kinds of public good such as mentoring a young person, making a garden, volunteering in the community, or a million other positive actions.

Market capitalism as we know it could not exist without the dishonesty of external costs. A society that paid the full and honest price to cover the damage of what it used would be close to unrecognizable. The cost of almost everything would be much greater—housing, transportation, food choices, recreation, just about everything. Millions of today's jobs would not exist.

**Problem #2: The mythology of efficiency.** Market capitalism claims it is the most efficient way to allocate resources for the greatest good of society. Consider the many sectors of jobs that exist such as manufacturing, health care, administration, resource extraction, agriculture, retail sales, utilities, public, environmental protection, construction, financial services.

Millions of jobs exist to repair the avoidable damage caused by millions of other jobs. Consider cleaning up pollution. Consider health care. Recall the comments above about

external costs. That's tens of millions of jobs and trillions of dollars spent manufacturing, buying, using, and discarding the products that make the problems and then millions more jobs and trillions more dollars cleaning up the air, water, land, and addressing the injury to people. This arrangement is the opposite of efficient. Market capitalism's boast about being efficient could not be further from the truth.

What can you say about an economic system that spends trillions of dollars on repairing the avoidable damage it creates and considers that good business? What can you say about an economic system that spends hundreds of billions of dollars promoting vanity and excess consumption at the same time it encourages people to buy products and services known to damage public health and the natural world?

**Problem #3: Disequity.** In a guest opinion this past summer in *The Guardian*, Bernie Sanders pointed out that the richest three people in the United States control financial assets equal to the least well-off 150 million Americans. Money buys the political system. The uneven possession and control of money insures enormous social, economic and political disequity.

Market capitalism is not broken. What we see is simply what it does. It concentrates economic and political power. It degrades public health and the well-being of the natural world. It is profoundly dishonest. It is inefficient to epic propor-

tions. It encourages human behavior at near complete odds to the teachings of the world's great spiritual traditions.

Market capitalism and its various elected and administrative helpers are guilty of so much wrongdoing that the country would be well served to set up a national truth and reconciliation process modeled after the truth and reconciliation structure used in South Africa to deal with the damage caused by Apartheid. Our own economic system and its sponsors deserve similar attention so our society can heal, unlearn, and chart a new and healthy direction.

### **A New Movement Already Exists**

Imagine:

1) Hundreds of thousands of people and thousands of organizations realizing they are on the same team because they are all addressing a problem created or made worse by capitalism and the consumer culture. A victory for one is a victory for all.

2) A basic set of ideals and principles that could help activate this team through a mission statement, well-planned outreach, and agreed-upon common messages.

3) Hundreds of thousands of people motivated to shift from "concern to action" to help bring about a deep paradigm shift.

The wisdom of the world's great spiritual traditions adds another level of value:

1) Care for the natural world.

2) Service to the community.

3) Modesty of lifestyle.

4) Uplift of the spirit.

5) Accountability for actions we take in our own lives.

Imagine a movement with an outreach message that articulated a set of practical ideas and principles to encourage individuals and organizations to take widespread synchronized action on behalf of creating healthy alternatives to capitalism and its consumer culture.

That outreach would include a mission statement—for example, "We are striving to bring about a society, economy, and political system that is just, accountable, and uplifting to the spirit and that can exist within the boundaries of the natural world."

This message would describe the social, economic, political, and environmental challenges of our time and what is causing them. It would describe how

hundreds of thousands of people and thousands of organizations are all working on repairing the extensive damage caused by capitalism and the consumer culture.

Two basic actions encouraged in the message would be to reduce individual, community, and society's ecological footprint, and to build multi-level social cohesion.

The outreach would welcome individuals and organizations to make common cause. There would be no forms to fill out. No permission needed. People could take these actions alone, with friends nearby, a mutual assistance group, or as part of a nonprofit, workplace, labor union, neighborhood association, school, or faith organization.

The message would explain concepts such as permaculture, one earth lifestyles, mutual assistance, economic and political democracy, place making, solidarity, and more.

Part of the message would explain what individuals can do at home and nearby such as turning yards to garden, moving towards a plant-based diet, collaborating with neighbors, sharing these ideas with others, creating a mutual assistance network.

For organizations, the message would explain why they are essential and the role they can play for this movement. Organizations have standing in the community; they have members, networks, and perhaps contacts with other groups, elected officials, and other agencies they can reach out to.

Organizations often ask their members and associates to help with the cause. If downsizing lifestyles becomes part of the cause, the organization can encourage members to downsize and provide educational materials and organize events for its members and the public explaining how to downsize, and why reducing eco-footprints is so important to people and planet and an essential step in replacing the current economic system and consumer culture.

### **Moving towards Political Democracy**

Grassroots actions at home and the community are the base of the paradigm shift pyramid. That pyramid can grow to support people running for political office. With enough coordinated activation in the community and region, paradigm shift activists can viably run for city, county, state, and even national office.

Given the extraordinary mobilization of movements such as the Occupy Movement, Black Lives Matter, and actions related to climate change, Indigenous rights, and resource scarcity, there is a great deal of energy for positive change and I believe far more stored up that is yet to manifest. A well-articulated movement bringing diverse groups together could set free an historical level of local, regional, and national activism that could well go global.

What might real political power lead to? High priorities would include reforms to voting and taxes, budget changes to favor people and planet, environmental legislation on behalf of the natural world, policies to encourage public transportation and rail, to assert labor and women's rights, to affirm that corporations are not people, and more.

Political democracy would be partnered with economic democracy. Public will, along with government policies, could bring about far more worker-owned and -man-

## **Truth and Reconciliation Capitalism and the Consumer Culture**

- Public Health
- The Environment
- Democracy
- Honesty and Accountability

UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTHERN INDIANA  
**CENTER FOR  
COMMUNAL  
STUDIES**

40 YEARS: 1976 – 2016



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](http://www.usi.edu/library/university-archives-and-special-collections).  
Email the archivist: [jagreene@usi.edu](mailto: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](http://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 March.

**For information contact:  
812-465-1656  
or Casey Harison at [charison@usi.edu](mailto:charison@usi.edu)**

aged businesses and cooperatives that are rooted in their communities. New financial institutions could facilitate keeping money local to be invested in local projects.

Public options, services that are not-for-profit with charters committing them to responsible management, can offer alternatives to for-profit business. Community-minded businesses could gain a sort of “organic standard” that identifies them as friendly to people and planet.

**COVID-19 and a More Viable, Downsized Future**

The effects of COVID-19 can shed some light on what a possible downsized future might look like. Disruption of supply chains and certain industries like hospitality, real estate, food production, and luxury products show how vulnerable our society is. A downsized future society will not resemble the current economy based on entertainment, vanity, and excess.

The virus shows how Americans can be impatient, undisciplined, and susceptible to inaccurate information. The virus also shows how most people are capable of making uninvited changes to adapt, while still others rise heroically to the occasion.

Moving towards sustainability will require heroes and those who can adjust. It will call on people to learn challenging new skills, both social and material. The virus is showing us great numbers of people will struggle with and even resist needed changes. Paradigm shift will require a great deal of care and compassion.

In the short term, we would be smart to invest time and money, while we have it, in transforming our lifestyles and communities. Verily, those actions are the start of paradigm shift.

Paradigm shift will depend on repurposing both public and private money, time, and assets towards the well-being of society and the natural world. We have a great deal to work with. We have enormous challenges. We have an historical opportunity that deserves our best effort. 🐦

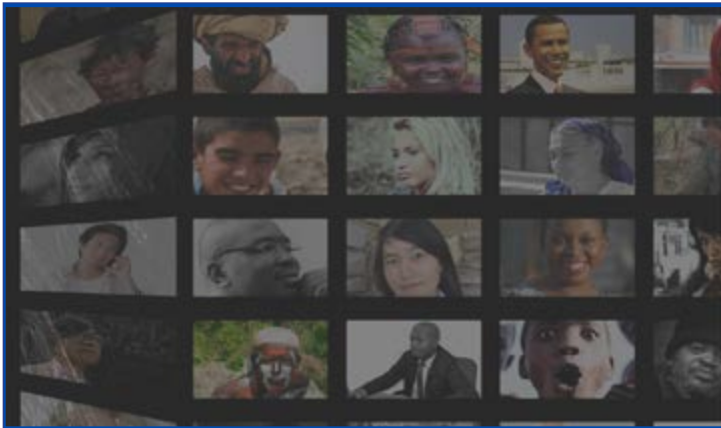
*For a longer and more detailed version of “From Five Earths to One, Part Three,” please visit [suburbanpermaculture.org](http://suburbanpermaculture.org).*

*Parts One and Two in this series, found in the Summer and Fall 2020 issues of COMMUNITIES, provide more context for Part Three by explaining downsizing and many existing examples of the “preferred future” such as suburban permaculture, ecovillages, placemaking, streets for people, and more.*

*Jan Spencer goes into considerable detail about market capitalism, one earth lifestyles, transforming suburbia, pushing back on cars, and ecovillages with his podcasts at [player.whooshkaa.com/shows/creating-a-resilient-future](http://player.whooshkaa.com/shows/creating-a-resilient-future). Check his website, too, for more content and links to YouTube videos: [suburbanpermaculture.org](http://suburbanpermaculture.org). Also see his YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/channel/UCll0oiYJZvCxb2ruWOodrUg?view\\_as=subscriber](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCll0oiYJZvCxb2ruWOodrUg?view_as=subscriber). Jan is available for making presentations over the internet. Contact him at [janrspencer@gmail.com](mailto:janrspencer@gmail.com).*







## 6 REASONS TO FOCUS ON COMMUNITY

- Strengthen connection and combat loneliness.
- Leverage the assets of the whole community to drive long-term change.
- Promote citizen-led multi-sector engagement and develop a common agenda.
- Build systems for belonging and community safety.
- Develop and implement neighbourhood or city-wide strategies for change.
- Strengthen neighbourhoods.

## DEEPENING COMMUNITY THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES

As we work together, as a nation, to flatten the curve of the global pandemic, we find ourselves at a unique crossroads. We have been working hard to find solutions to a problem whose scope is beyond anything communities have ever encountered. However, it is in communities that we will find the strength to not only persevere but emerge stronger and more resilient than ever.

**Tamarack Institute's** Vibrant Communities – Cities Deepening Community is a movement and network aimed at deepening the sense of community across Canada. We work with cities and neighbourhoods to create a movement that provides conditions that make deepening community a priority.

Visit [deepeningcommunity.ca](http://deepeningcommunity.ca) to learn more about the Cities Deepening Community network.



Creating deeper communities is THE opportunity of our time. As we learn the skills to transform our neighbourhoods, we restore our capacity to care for one another.



### LEARN

**Annual National Gathering of Cities deepening Community – *Celebrating Neighbours-Measuring the Impact of ABCD***. In June 2021, we will explore the impact of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) and leading neighbourhood and community revitalizing strategies.

**Webinars** - Deepening Community hosts a variety of dynamic webinars with leading thinkers or practitioners on a wide variety of topics.

**Neighbours Journal** - an online bi-monthly publication that offers the latest resources and events on collaboration and neighbourhood development.

### PARTICIPATE

Join over 6,000 learners to deepen your understanding of Neighbourhood development in one of our Communities of Practice.

**Neighbourhood Leaders Forum** - Connect with cities and organizations interested in building strong neighbourhoods.

**Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)** - Advancing practical learning about this important community development approach.

**Citizens and Emergency Preparedness** - Connecting cities that are advancing citizen engagement in disaster preparedness.

### ACT

Join 18 cities and neighbourhoods working to deepen the collective understanding of the power and possibility of community by developing strategies at the neighbourhood or city level. We are accepting members from across Canada and the United States. Contact Heather Keam at [heather@tamarackcommunity.ca](mailto:heather@tamarackcommunity.ca) to learn more about the network and membership.



## Diana Leaf Christian Sociocracy Webinars

NEXT WEBINAR, MONDAY EVENINGS:

**Feb. 8 – Apr. 12, 2021**

\* Pacific Time, 5-7 pm \* Mountain 6-8 pm  
\* Central, 7-9 pm \* Eastern, 8-10 pm

**“I’m excited for each week of Diana’s sociocracy course. She’s an engaging trainer who truly understands how to teach sociocracy for intentional communities in a way that people actually get it; I feel like I’m learning from the best. I think she should charge three or four times more though — I’m finding her course that valuable.”**

—Chris Herndon, Life Coach, Seattle, Washington Sociocracy Webinar, Oct-Dec, 2020

**“Learning sociocracy with Diana is the biggest reason our community is thriving, mostly from her deep knowledge of sociocracy in communities, while her charm and teaching style kept it fun and engaging.”**

—Jordan Lindsay, Teal House, Calgary, Sociocracy Webinar, Jan-March, 2020

**10 weeks, 35 hours instruction:**  
2-hour live practice sessions.  
1.5 hour prep time with short videos & handouts

\$245-\$445 sliding scale  
Early Bird Discount \$225-\$445 thru Jan 4

**More Info:**  
<https://tinyurl.com/SociocracyFeb2021>



Email: [diana@ic.org](mailto:diana@ic.org)



# REACH

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

You may contact our Advertising Manager to place a REACH ad. Email [ads@gen-us.net](mailto:ads@gen-us.net), or go to [gen-us.net/communities](http://gen-us.net/communities) for more information or to submit your ad online (once website is fully functional).

THE REACH DEADLINE FOR ISSUE #190 - Spring 2021 (out in March) is February 1, 2021.

The rate for REACH ads is... Up to 50 Words: \$25/issue or \$60/year; Up to 100 Words: \$50/issue or \$100/year; Up to 250 Words: \$75/issue or \$200/year.

You may pay using a credit card or PayPal by contacting the Advertising Manager, or mail a check or money order payable to GEN-US with your ad text, word count, and duration of the ad, plus your contact information, to: Attn.: Linda Joseph/Communities, 64001 County Road DD, Moffat, CO 81143.

## COMMUNITIES WITH OPENINGS

**LOST VALLEY EDUCATION AND EVENT CENTER** has opportunities for new residents and our volunteer work-trade program. We are an intentional community of about 35 people located a half-hour east of Eugene, Oregon. Founded in 1989, our nonprofit focuses on sustainable and holistic education, permaculture, ecstatic dance, and personal growth and healing events. Our center hosts retreats that align with our vision of a deep connection with the Self, each other, and nature. Our current residents range from young children to elders. We have 87 mostly-forested acres with cabins, apartments, RV/tiny home sites, tent campsites, a lodge, two dorms, a creek, a large camas meadow, an outdoor kitchen, several gardens, a sacred yurt, a wood-fired sauna and hot tub. Community dinners are served Monday-Friday. We offer affordable housing and meal plan options. Some residents run their own small businesses, many have staff positions, and some work off-site for their income. Work trade involves between 15-25 hours a week of work in exchange for accommodation and food. Inquiries about residency: [sitemanager@lostvalley.org](mailto:sitemanager@lostvalley.org). Inquiries about work trade: [volunteer@lostvalley.org](mailto:volunteer@lostvalley.org). No unannounced visits, please. Visit us at [www.lostvalley.org](http://www.lostvalley.org) to learn more.

**VALLEY OF LIGHT IS A COMMUNITY FOR CULTURAL CREATIVES** that rests along the New River in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. With \$2 million invested, our 23-acre campus is debt-free and includes 7 homes, 5 new building pads, campground, barn, garden, “Peace Pentagon” conference and community center, and other amenities. We share our campus with The Oracle Institute, an educational charity that operates a spirituality school, award-winning press, and peacebuilding practice. We seek co-founding members in five Paths: Native (farmers, animal & land stewards); Scientist (health & tech); Artisan (art, music, construction); Peacemaker (teachers & activists); Oracle (spirit seekers). Visit: [www.TheOracleInstitute.org/about-our-community](http://www.TheOracleInstitute.org/about-our-community) & [www.PeacePentagon.net](http://www.PeacePentagon.net); Contact [Info@ValleyofLight.org](mailto:Info@ValleyofLight.org).

**COWEETA HERITAGE CENTER AND TALKING ROCK FARM** are located in the mountains of Western North Carolina in a beautiful and diverse temperate rainforest. CHC is looking for others who would like to join together to form an Intentional Community embracing the principles of Voluntary Simplicity and Healing the Earth and Each Other. 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, ap-

propriate 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](mailto:coweeta@gmail.com). Visit Coweeta on the web at [www.coweetaheritagecenter.com](http://www.coweetaheritagecenter.com)

**COHOUSING A LA MEXICANA!** Located near Ajijic Lake Chapala, 3 Acres are now being developed with new homes. We stand for Sustainability, Community, Multiversity and Aging in Place. We are seeking quality VISIONARY and ADVENTUROUS members/investors to embrace and help us manifest this shared dream. Contact Jaime Navarro at [info@rancholasaludvillage.com](mailto:info@rancholasaludvillage.com) or [www.rancholasaludvillage.com](http://www.rancholasaludvillage.com)

**MORNINGLAND COMMUNITY** is offering work/study opportunities for those interested in deepening their meditation practice to include contemplative service. Some co-housing available. Our community is offline, digitally unplugged, and a great place to catch your breath. Call 562.433.9906 for more information and to apply. “Simple living and high thinking” – Yogananda. 2600 E. 7th St, Long Beach, CA 90804.

## COMMUNITIES FORMING

**RALSTON CREEK COHOUSING ARVADA CO** - Imagine an energetic group of eclectic families who value treading lightly on the land. They come together near Old Town to design a vibrant common house and 20 private dwellings. What if this whole urban village called Geos was powered by solar and ground source energy (net zero), had a community garden and a view of the mountains. Picture being near a creekside bike path with 300 days of sunshine. You unplug your electric car, hop onto I-70 to ski and come home to relax with a glass of wine and dinner with friends. [www.ralstoncreekcohousing.org](http://www.ralstoncreekcohousing.org)

## SERVICES/OPPORTUNITIES/PRODUCTS

**CLIFFORD PAULIN: LEGAL, MEDIATION, AND FACILITATION SERVICES** for individuals, businesses, communities, and non-profits. I work with existing and newly forming communities of various scales and backgrounds to create robust and responsive legal structures, provide transactional and non-profit law support, and offer dispute resolution solutions. Contact me through [cliffordpaulin.com](http://cliffordpaulin.com) or at 707-228-9118.

FITCH ARCHITECTURE & COMMUNITY DESIGN is internationally recognized as one of the most experienced firms in cohousing programming and design. Working with over two dozen communities across North America, we have evolved an effective and enjoyable participatory process. Laura Fitch is a resident of Pioneer Valley Cohousing in Amherst, Massachusetts. Her experience as a member helps her to understand the issues facing other cohousing groups and gives her unique insight into the group dynamics that affect the design process. Laura served on the Cohousing Association of the US board for five years and regularly leads workshops at their conferences. Contact her at 413-549-5799 or [www.facdarchitects.com](http://www.facdarchitects.com).

WELCOME TO THE ENERGY REVOLUTION: LIVING ENERGY LIGHTS. We offer reliable, durable products for stand-alone solar energy systems. Whether you are building an off-grid homestead, exploring microgrid options for your neighborhood, or looking for an affordable and dependable emergency backup system, Living Energy Lights can help meet your energy needs. See [www.livingenergylights.com](http://www.livingenergylights.com) or contact us at [info@livingenergylights.com](mailto:info@livingenergylights.com). See also Living Energy Farm's articles in past issues of Communities (#187, #183, #179, #174, #161, and others) for more information about our work.

WHY PAY RENT/MORTGAGE PAYMENTS when you can live rent free? We publish 1,000+ property caretaking and house sitting opportunities, worldwide, each year. We cover all 50 states and overseas. Online subscription: \$29.95/year. Postal subscription: \$34.95/year. Published since 1983. The Caretaker Gazette, 1205 E 31st Street, Austin TX 78722. (206) 462-1818; To learn more, please visit [www.caretaker.org](http://www.caretaker.org).

PROMOTE CLIMATE JUSTICE THROUGH SLOWING POPULATION GROWTH: Endangered Species Condoms are available free to people who promise to distribute them. Real condoms in attractive, humorous containers. Visit [www.endangeredspeciescondoms.com](http://www.endangeredspeciescondoms.com).

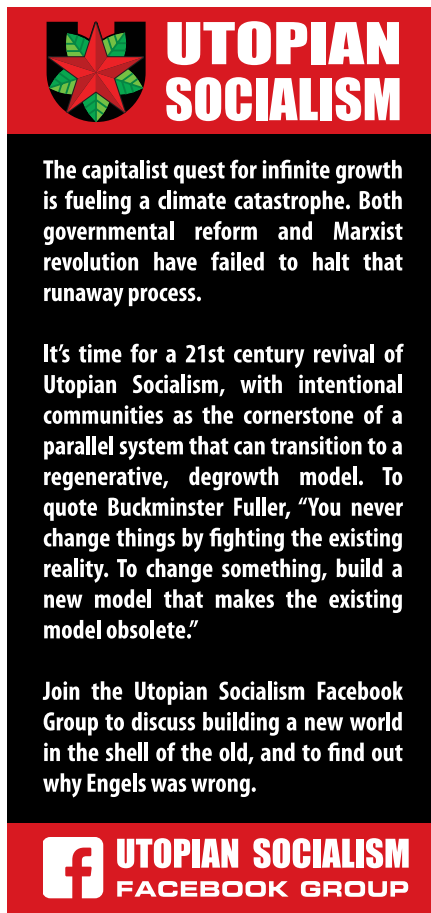
### PUBLICATIONS, BOOKS, WEBSITES, WORKSHOPS

SAGEWOMAN MAGAZINE, celebrating the Goddess in Every Woman, still going strong after 30 years. WITCHES & PAGANS magazine covers Pagan, Wiccan, Heathen, and Polytheist people, places, and practice. 88 pages, print or digital (PDF). Mention this Communities ad for a free sample. 503-430-8817, P O Box 687, Forest Grove, OR, 97116. [www.bbimedia.com](http://www.bbimedia.com).

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN INDIANA-CENTER FOR COMMUNAL STUDIES (CCS) - The Center for Communal Studies (CCS) was created in 1976 as a clearinghouse for information and as a research resource on communal groups worldwide, past and present. Located on the campus of the University of Southern Indiana in Evansville, the Center encourages scholarship, meetings, public understanding and learning about historic and contemporary intentional communities.

ARCHIVAL RESEARCH COLLECTION: We invite researchers to use the Center's Collection of primary and secondary materials on more than 500 historic and contemporary communes. Our Collection is housed at Rice Library and has over 10,000 images and a reading room with an extensive library. Online resources may be found at [www.usi.edu/library/university-archives-and-special-collections](http://www.usi.edu/library/university-archives-and-special-collections). Email the archivist at [jagreene@usi.edu](mailto:jagreene@usi.edu) for information.

REGIONAL RESEARCH: The CCS is part of a rich array of historic communal resources within a 30-mile radius of Evansville that includes the famous Harmonist and Owenite village of New Harmony. New Harmony's Work-



**UTOPIAN SOCIALISM**

The capitalist quest for infinite growth is fueling a climate catastrophe. Both governmental reform and Marxist revolution have failed to halt that runaway process.

It's time for a 21st century revival of Utopian Socialism, with intentional communities as the cornerstone of a parallel system that can transition to a regenerative, degrowth model. To quote Buckminster Fuller, "You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete."

Join the Utopian Socialism Facebook Group to discuss building a new world in the shell of the old, and to find out why Engels was wrong.

**UTOPIAN SOCIALISM**  
FACEBOOK GROUP



STOP working for money. Walk away from the rat race... ..and work for Love instead, in a growing Christian community!

Go to: [youtube.com/AVoiceInTheDesert](https://youtube.com/AVoiceInTheDesert) and search for: **Happily Homeless**

## ARE YOU READY TO CREATE COOPERATIVE CULTURE?



THIS IS THE HANDBOOK FOR GROUPS AND TEAMS WHO WANT TO ACHIEVE THEIR MISSION AND BUILD REAL COOPERATION.

GET YOUR COPY!

[ic.org/handbook](http://ic.org/handbook)

PLUS! Get \$5 off with the discount code **SHANDBOOK**

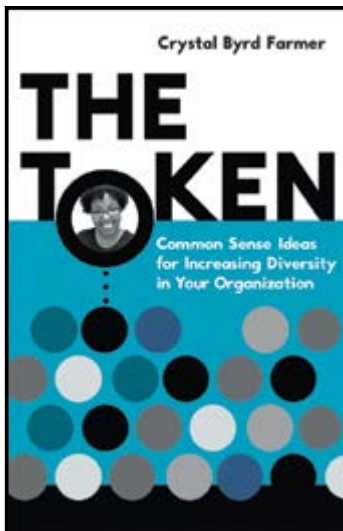
# THE TOKEN

Common Sense Ideas for Increasing Diversity in Your Organization

CRYSTAL BYRD FARMER

\$14.99

With a blunt style that pulls no punches, Crystal tells you how it is, calling you out on tokenism, while extending a hand to help your organization make real transformative change toward diversity and inclusion.



▶ 100% POST CONSUMER RECYCLED PAPER ▶ CARBON NEUTRAL ▶ B CORP™ ▶ EMPLOYEE SHAREHOLDERS

ingmen's Institute Library and the State Museum collection also offer unique research opportunities.

PROGRAMS: The CCS sponsors lectures, conferences and exhibits. The Center sponsors a minor in Communal Studies at USI.

WEBSITE: The CCS website ([www.usi.edu/liberal-arts/communal-center](http://www.usi.edu/liberal-arts/communal-center)) serves scholars, students and the interested public.

CENTER PRIZES AND RESEARCH TRAVEL GRANT: The CCS annually awards a Prize of \$250 for the Best Undergraduate Student Paper and a Prize of \$500 for the Best Graduate Student Paper on historic or contemporary communal groups, intentional communities, and utopias. Deadline for submission is 1 March. The Center also annually awards a \$2,000 Research Travel Grant to fund research in the Communal Studies Collection. Applications are due by 1 March.

LOCATION AND CONTACT: CCS is located in Room 3022 of Rice Library at the University of Southern Indiana. Evansville has a regional airport with jet service from Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas and elsewhere. You may contact the Center by phone 812/465-1656 or email director Casey Harison at [charison@usi.edu](mailto:charison@usi.edu).

FREE GROUP PROCESS RESOURCES AT TREE BRESSEN'S WEBSITE: [www.treegroup.info](http://www.treegroup.info). Topics include consensus, facilitation, conflict, community building, alternative meeting formats, etc. Workshop handouts, articles, exercises, and more!

QUAKER CURIOUS? Learn more about modern Friends at [Quaker.org](http://Quaker.org). Watch short video interviews at [QuakerSpeak.com](http://QuakerSpeak.com). Or dive deep into Friends Publishing with daily, weekly, and monthly Friends Journal articles in print and online at [Friendsjournal.org](http://Friendsjournal.org).

Do you know that there are nearly one thousand intentional communities just in the United States?

Check out the online hub for intentional communities!

Explore our online directory, download free resources, join virtual workshops and more.



Come visit us at

[ic.org/cmag](http://ic.org/cmag)



A fictional ethnography of the Rainbow Gathering.

The story of a wanderer finding her path and discovering her true community.

Available from your local bookseller or

[FallingFromTheMoon.com](http://FallingFromTheMoon.com)

---

## OPENING PANDEMIC'S BOX

(continued from p. 68)

of things (material acquisition does not buy joy), and from substituting relationships for bank accounts when it comes to security. If your workers are communitarians and don't need as many dollars to meet needs, it gives you tremendous leverage in what constitutes fair and adequate compensation.

• **Access to a Reliable and Flexible Workforce:** The most efficient and economical way to grow a business is to have access to staffers with good skills and a willingness to work part-time and on flexible schedules for reasonable pay. It is often easier to find that combination in intentional communities than in the mainstream.

• **A Ready Market for Your Goods and Services:** Finding that first batch of customers and getting fully established in the marketplace are often the biggest challenges in getting a new business off the ground. The network of existing intentional communities offers a huge opportunity for a “built-in” marketplace and sources of support, as many communities will be happy to give a community-based business a first chance, providing only that you are selling something the community needs.

• **A Strong Built-In Support System:** Being an entrepreneur can be lonely. While they are in the minority in the community world as well as in the mainstream, a basic understanding exists within community that everyone needs support, and entrepreneurs are far more likely to find their like kind in a community context than in the general society. Mutual support, assistance, and assurances that you are not weird (or at least not *too* weird) can be invaluable to the fledgling entrepreneur.

• **Realizing the Potential of Values-Aligned Work:** As much as any segment of the population, communitarians understand the appeal and power of aligning one's actions with one's values. By virtue of the other advantages listed above it's often possible for communitarians to insist on work that fits well with their values, and this has tremendous synergy with job satisfaction, mental health, and company loyalty.

• **This May Be the Community Movement's Moment:** Every movement struggles to find the critical mass of support and accomplishment that propels it towards its most impactful role in the world. What communities honor and strive for with our commitment to creating cooperative culture lines up well with the needs of a deeply wounded planet and a fractured citizenry whose political, economic, and ecological structures are so at risk.

If sustainability is a three-legged stool—ecological, social, and economic—then economics is most often the wobbly leg. To the extent that communities are committed to sustainability, we believe they need to up their economic game in order to advance their mission, to better meet members' needs, and to offer a relevant alternative to a world of increasing financial chaos. 🐦

---

*Laird Schaub and Terry O'Keefe along with Brinton Reed have formed Bluebird, a three-person team focusing on the intersection of community living and entrepreneurial initiative. Their services include analysis and recommendations about an individual community's business ideas: feasibility, match with community skills/capacity, marketability, publicity strategies, staffing, implementation, partnering potential, budgeting, and start-up capital needs. They also assist communities with the dynamic challenges of business activity by offering workshops to explore member attitudes about money; guidance on how to navigate the potential awkwardness of two people being equals as community members, while at the same time being employee/manager in a community business; and advice to help entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs get along well with each other. For more details, please see [www.bluebird.community](http://www.bluebird.community).*

---

1. Indeed, a September 26, 2020 *Wall Street Journal* article reported that “Americans are starting new businesses at the fastest rate in more than a decade, according to government data, seizing on pent-up demand and new opportunities after the pandemic shut down and reshaped the economy.”



LOS ANGELES  
ECO-VILLAGE

Re-inventing how we live in the  
city since 1993

Urban Soil-Tierra Urbana  
Limited Equity Housing Co-op

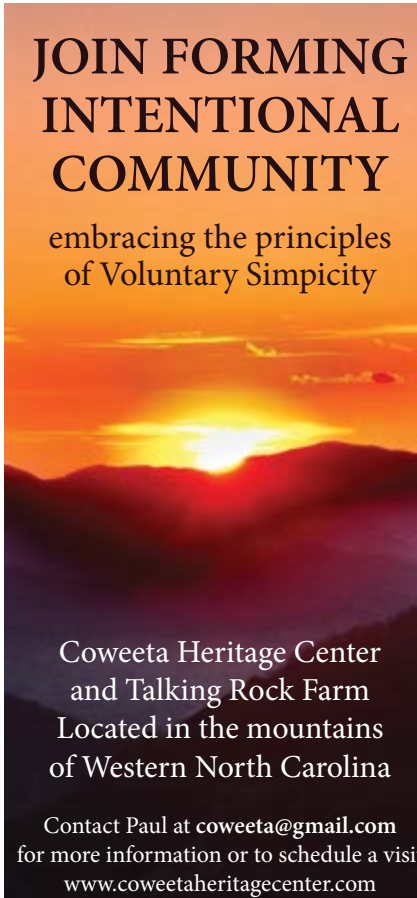
Los Angeles Ecovillage Institute

Beverly-Vermont Community  
Land Trust

Education, training, workshops,  
public talks, tours



[www.laecovillage.org](http://www.laecovillage.org)  
213-738-1254



JOIN FORMING  
INTENTIONAL  
COMMUNITY

embracing the principles  
of Voluntary Simplicity

Coweeta Heritage Center  
and Talking Rock Farm  
Located in the mountains  
of Western North Carolina

Contact Paul at [coweeta@gmail.com](mailto:coweeta@gmail.com)  
for more information or to schedule a visit  
[www.coweetaheritagecenter.com](http://www.coweetaheritagecenter.com)

# Opening Pandemic's Box



Photos courtesy of Brinton Foy Reed

There is a saying that change breeds opportunity. While most of us have had our eyes on the disruption, dangers, and uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic—and properly so—we want to take a step back to digest what's happening from a perspective of change and opportunity, where it's likely to head, and what doors may be opening.

Amazingly, if you have ever thought about starting a community-based business, there may never have been a better time than right now.

## Whole Lot of Shaking Going on

The US economy is being shaken (not stirred) as never before. To wit:

- At the beginning of the year, the restaurant industry was booming. Then, virtually overnight, owners were scrambling to hang on to their businesses with skeleton staffing and the sale of take-out food. The outlook for that segment is now so dire that the Independent Restaurant Coalition recently predicted that up to 85 percent of its member businesses may be permanently shuttered by the end of the year. Yikes.

- Who could have guessed how quickly the medical profession would switch to offering “house calls” via digital technology? It's a safe bet that we will soon see a flood of new patient-based technologies that will make virtual visits as information-rich as actual visits to a doctor's office—all without the hassle of commuting, sitting in the waiting area, or worrying about whether you're suitably masked.

- In 2019, the 10 largest department store chains in America collectively did more than 100 billion dollars in sales. This year, thanks to the pandemic, more than half of them are headed for

bankruptcy court, including such iconic names as Macy's, JC Penney, Nordstrom, J Crew, and Neiman Marcus. The old retail model of in-store shopping is quickly giving way to online purchasing. The upstart competition combines narrow product lines, “virtual showrooms,” innovative “try-on” policies, and speedy delivery to attract shoppers at home. You don't need bricks and mortar to get into the game, and \$100 billion is a large pie to divvy up.

- A couple of years ago, surveys revealed that no more than one in 20 employees were based at home. Thanks to the pandemic, however, more than half of “knowledge workers” are currently operating out of their home, and growing numbers of companies are telling their employees to continue doing so after the pandemic passes, if they can. It's a radical workplace shift that likely would have taken decades to effect without the pandemic serving as an accelerant.

In short, the business world is being transformed on every level. Newer and smaller businesses that are nimble enough to spot new trends and gaps in the market may find gold in the chaos.<sup>1</sup>

## Where Community-Based Businesses Have Advantages

So why should intentional communities be interested in all this economic upheaval? Let's take a close look at the ways that community-based business may have an edge.

- **Making Dollars Stretch Farther:** Many communitarians have made choices that allow them to live well on less money—notably through sharing (you don't need to own everything if you have access to it), through unlinking quality of life from quantity

*(continued on p. 67)*

# Subscribe to COMMUNITIES Magazine



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

Each issue is focused around a theme:

- Social Permaculture • Service and Activism
  - Ecovillages around the World • Gender Issues
  - Finding or Starting a Community • Spirituality
  - Community and the Law • Food and Community
  - Community for Baby Boomers • Right Livelihood
  - Technology: Friend or Foe? • Business Ventures
  - Renewable Energy • Youth • Diversity ...
- Reach listings—helping community-seekers and communities looking for people

**Now including complete back issue digital access (more than 185 issues)!**

## 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

**PRINT SUBSCRIPTIONS:** • **First subscription:** \$30 per year in US, \$40 per year outside of US • **Additional (gift or "pay it forward") print subscriptions in US:** \$25 per year in US, \$35 per year outside of US • Every print subscription also includes access to all digital back issues and a current digital subscription.

**DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTIONS:** • **First subscription:** \$20 per year (digital, anywhere in world) • **Additional (gift or "pay it forward") digital subscriptions:** \$15 per year • Every digital subscription also includes access to all digital back issues.

Please see details on page 11 or visit [GEN-US.NET/COMMUNITIES](http://GEN-US.NET/COMMUNITIES) to subscribe; you can pay online or mail a check or money order (payable to COMMUNITIES Magazine) to: **Attn.: Linda Joseph/Communities, 64001 County Road DD, Moffat, CO 81143.**

**To subscribe online, visit [GEN-US.NET/COMMUNITIES](http://GEN-US.NET/COMMUNITIES)**

# The Problem

There are 3 existential threats facing humanity right now:

**Ecosystem Collapse:** Insect populations have been decimated by 25% each decade over the last 30 years (United Nations).

**Soil Erosion:** According to the UN, we only have about 60 years of topsoil left on the planet. Other estimates are as low as 30 years.

**Climate Change:** Atmospheric Carbon levels are off the charts. Scientists have been able to use ice core samples to look back over the last 800,000 years and have documented the correlation between temperature and CO<sub>2</sub> levels.

# The Soil-ution

Restoring the world's soils to a natural state could potentially solve all of these problems. Think about it, the living part of our planet is its skin (the soil) and of course the oceans. We have drastically altered the balance of microbes on the skin using the plow (over the last 10,000 years) and chemicals over the last 100 years.

The good news is that soil biology can be rebalanced in a matter of months!

Dr. Elaine Ingham has developed a holistic approach to soil biology. The Soil Food Web Approach is all about restoring natural balance to soil biology. It's a simple 3-step process in which mother nature is given a helping hand.... Then she does the rest!



Quantify the Microbes



Balance the Soil Biology



Enjoy the Results!

We offer a simple 2-step training program that has been specifically designed for people with no background in agriculture or biology.

Once we have introduced all the major groups of microbes that make up the Soil Food Web, in approximately the right balance, the symbiotic relationships that these organisms enjoy with plants ensure that the perfect balance is achieved. The plants feed the microbes and the microbes feed the plants. Having all the right predators in place ensures a natural balance is maintained.

## Step 1: DR. ELAINE'S™ FOUNDATION COURSES (FCs)

This is where you will learn all of the underpinning science of the Soil Food Web, as well as all the information required to implement Dr. Elaine's™ Approach in order to regenerate the soils in your community. This is a theory-based course, comprising 63 online lectures and quizzes that you can take at your own pace.

Save \$1,500 on the FCs with coupon: COMMUNITY

## Step 2: THE CONSULTANT TRAINING PROGRAM (CTP)

Once you've completed the Foundation Courses, you can join the Consultant Training Program and gain all the practical skills and confidence you'll need to start your new career as a Soil Consultant or Compost Producer. This is where you will put all the theory learned in the Foundation Courses into practice, under the guidance of your personal mentor.

We offer a 30-day, money-back guarantee!

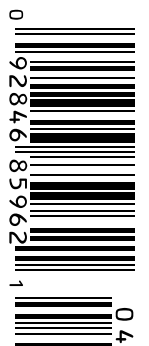
If you want to start a new career that can help stop the destruction of our planet and make you a good living, then this could be for you! Some of our consultants earn over \$1,000/day helping farmers to reduce their costs and increase their yields! Visit [www.soilfoodweb.com/community](http://www.soilfoodweb.com/community) to learn more.

@dr.elaines.soil.foodweb.school

@OfficialpageSFWcourses



**COMMUNITIES:**  
**Life in Cooperative Culture**  
81868 Lost Valley Ln. Dexter, OR 97431  
Subscriptions: \$30 US/\$40 Int'l  
gen-us.net/communities  
Publisher: Global Ecovillage Network—US  
Partners: NextGENNA  
Foundation for Intentional Community



\$7.95 / \$9.95 Canada