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COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture
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ECOLOGICAL CULTURE: THE LONG HAUL

Marxist Ecology

A Place to Call Home

The Farm: The First 50 Years

Native Wildlife vs. Cats and Dogs

Restoring Ecosystems and Communities

COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

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

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 However, we do not publish articles that 1) advocate violent practices, or 2) advocate that a community interfere with its members' right to leave.

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

Submissions Policy

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What is an “Intentional Community”?

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

Poetry BY STEPHEN WING

Toward Nightfall

The mosquitos
must have known I was coming,
their greetings
impossible to ignore!

*The okra stalks
reaching high over my head
into the sky*

Through the fence,
fragrance of cut grass;
on this side
aroma of compost.

*The collard leaves
catching the low breezes
close to the ground*

Chickens cackling back
at the wild birds
in the trees, passing cars
answering the creek.

*The strawberry vines
spilling over
their frame of weathered planks*

Rumble and clatter
of a lawnmower,
burning long-extinct fossils
to tame the grass next door.

*The chard
curling inward like huge,
half-closed hands*

A little swath of silence
where water ripples over stones,
birds chirp, spreading branches
hide the sky.

*The chili peppers
dangling from spiral vines
through their wire cage*

The lawnmower abruptly quits.
The silence flows on
toward nightfall.

*The honeybees
drifting to and fro,
stitching it all
together 🍯*

COVER PHOTO COURTESY OF SUSAN JENNINGS

Speaking of Ecological Culture

Imagine a language in which the verb “to be” does not exist—because “being” is the underlying assumption, the pre-existing “given” throughout the language. Instead, foundational verbs exist for “doing/making,” “coming/becoming,” “going,” “seeing,” “giving,” and other actions, often combined with additional words to create other meanings.

In this world, “thinking” and “feeling” are indistinguishable, represented by a single word. No separation exists between those two functions. Nor is there a difference between “to want” and “to need.”

The same verb is used for “living,” “inhabiting” (a place), and having human kin; our relationships to place and to relatives are indistinguishable from our relationships to life and time.

“Masculine” and “feminine” are not differentiated either in third-person pronouns or in most nouns. Instead, “personhood” vs. “nonpersonhood” is the main available distinction, with personhood and volition granted to not only people but also other animals, plants, places, natural phenomena, anything with which one has an intimate connection.

In this world, past, present, and future are less important to distinguish—no verb tenses exist to limit the speaker or writer to one of those three choices, though other words are available to specify time when that is important. It often isn’t.

Abstract concepts are given little attention in this language. Daily activities, natural phenomena, interrelationships, and the living world predominate.

The world just described is the one I stepped into last fall when I started studying Chinuk Wawa, the Native American trade language of the Pacific Northwest, via a highly interactive Zoom class. Since then, that class and creating this magazine have been my main outside activities while in a prolonged pandemic lockdown of sorts, with family but away from my home community.

Through this process I’ve come to appreciate both of these languages more than I had before. I appreciate Chinuk Wawa for all the reasons outlined above. It is simple, poetic, to the point, and seems a much more direct path to unencumbered wisdom, to “right relationship” within ourselves, with one another, within the world. It embodies insights and understandings that the English language by its very nature and habitual usage often stifles—unconsciously even when not consciously.

At the same time, English contains, by one estimate, one million words; in Chinuk Wawa, a few thousand (including combining forms) currently exist. The range of nuance, flavor, particularity, the tiny differences that a writer of English can create by switching even a single word for one of its many subtly-differing synonyms, or by fiddling with punctuation and word order in the ways an editor is wont to do, is, to put it plainly, amazing.

If English is in some ways a prison because of the assumptions embedded in it by conventional usage in the nonindigenous societies which have created and employed it, it also contains within itself an abundance of tools with which to subvert it, to shake it and us out of that prison. The power of poetry often derives from this shaking-of-assumptions, a transcendence of prosaic reality made possible by the language’s cornucopia of words (coming from many other languages) and the nearly endless ways in which to use them. In fact, my second-term Chinuk Wawa final project was translating 25 songs which used English precisely in this way—questioning prosaic cultural reality—into Chinuk Wawa. I found the translation surprisingly natural.

This magazine is full of words, almost all of them English. Yet I hope they, too, shake readers out of conventional assumptions, cause a questioning and rethinking of worldview and practice. Many readers are already well along this path—the suggestions and stories in these articles will not be strange or shocking. Yet I hope each story contains at least something that is new, inspiring, educational, insight-provoking, challenging, and/or affirming for every reader.

“Ecological Culture” has not been our dominant language. Yet many are learning to speak it, and hopefully live it once again—to the degree that is and will be possible. It needs to be a collective effort to have any chance of success.

As with our last issue, we received such an abundance of material for this issue that we created a digital supplement to the print edition—pages which also appear in the full digital version. We are offering free downloads¹ of that separate supplement to anyone, subscriber or not. We hope you’ll help us spread word about it to others who would benefit from it and who may then want to seek out our full editions. Subscriptions² and donations³ continue to be our main sources of funding; both are essential to our continued existence. Thank you to all who’ve contributed.

Another way you can support us is by supporting our advertisers and letting them know you heard about them from us. (I for one am a longtime satisfied customer of our back-cover advertiser, by far the most “green” roadside assistance service around—for bikes as well as cars—and was thrilled to learn they’d be doing a trial advertisement with us; you can keep them coming back by signing up too.) Likewise, other groups and individuals place ads with us because they know they’ll find values-aligned readers here; please let them know that is the case!

Finally, thank you for joining us again. We always welcome feedback, as well as your own submissions⁴ of articles, poetry, photography, artwork. 🐦

Chris Roth edits COMMUNITIES.



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Students from our EcoVillage Ithaca’s Eco-Gap program work with Ithaca College students in West Haven Farm’s greenhouse, Fall 2018. Photo by Liz Walker.

A Place to Call Home

By Alexis Zeigler

This article is adapted from Chapter Three of the new book, Empowering Communities: A Practical Guide to Energy Self-Sufficiency and Stopping Climate Change, available from conev.org.

In pre-industrial Europe, peasants lived in cob cottages made of mud and straw. A fire without a chimney might be alight in the middle of the floor, smoke making its way up through the thatch. It was not luxurious by modern standards, but on a cold winter night, it offered some protection from the life-threatening elements.

The wealthier classes who could afford the private estates built their dwellings to convey status upon the homeowner. The early historic palaces were deadly cold, except next to the roaring fireplace that used tons of wood. These palaces were an environmental horror story, but as statues displaying the wealth of their owners, they were something others sought to emulate. In the centuries since that time, more and more people have sought to build houses that symbolize wealth and social status. That means maximizing size. Building housing based on the display of status, emulating the habits of the wealthy rather than building things that function well, is a major contributor to all of our social and environmental problems.

That problem is not addressed by simply adding solar panels to the roof. Housing that is inexpensive to build and operates with little energy input is actually easy and cheap from a material

standpoint, if you are willing to break the Roman property code¹. Few are. I have had hundreds of friends face the dilemma of trying to power American housing with renewable energy. None prevail. If you get more people involved, it's not hard at all. But you need to set different priorities than social status as measured by current standards.

I rebuilt a house some years ago. The house was originally built by working class women who came home after work and laid blocks with their own weathered hands. The family had lived there for a long time. For decades, they had struggled to rise above their economic poverty. The signs of their struggle were written, literally and figuratively, all over the dwelling itself.

I pulled down the paneling. Scraped through the layers of wallpaper, then more layers of paint, all accumulated over decades. Block walls have basically no insulation value, and these walls were block. The heaters, the woodstoves, all had been pouring heat into an uninsulated building over the course of decades, chains shackling the inhabitants to a string of bills they could not afford.

More than a century ago, farmers in Nebraska got their first hay balers. What they didn't get was good lumber. So they stacked up their bales and made houses, some of which are standing to this day. A strawbale house has, quite by accident in this case, an insulation value about four times as high as a modern, insulated house. Given the mathematical quirks of multiplying numbers nearing zero, we need not compare straw and cinder blocks.

1. Chapter One of *Empowering Communities* discusses how, in forming empire, the Romans privatized farms and broke down villages and tribes to create loyalty to the state. The Roman property code—separating dwellings from each other, surrounded by privately-held land whose extent conferred status—had devastating social and environmental consequences.



Photos courtesy of Alexis Zeigler



House with just straw.

This housing was superior in a social sense, and used a small fraction of the total energy normal Americans used.

I wrapped strawbales around the cinder block house. I put in solar heat (solar hot water collectors on the roof) with massive thermal storage in radiant floors—not solar electricity. I moved in some friends and made it a cooperative house. That means that in the evening, we played music, talked, had social events, instead of sitting home alone. We cooked dinner for each other every evening, though certainly not everyone attended every day. If you got sick, or felt bad, or needed help, there were people around. I have lived this way all of my life. I cannot imagine living alone. That seems terrible and threatening. I would make me mentally ill to do that.

The environmental impacts were unbelievable. I asked my friends around town who live in ordinary houses to give me their energy bills. I was looking at domestic energy use in the house, not transportation, food, or energy use outside the house. I standardized everything—electricity, natural gas, propane, firewood—to BTUs. (BTUs are a measure of energy, easily converted into kilowatts or joules.) These were all environmentally conscientious people. The results were surprising. Compared to the number of BTUs the average American used in their homes, the people I looked at used 80 to 140 percent, with the average around 120 percent. My environmentally conscientious friends were using more energy than the average American at home! How could that be? Well, the national average includes a lot of urban people living in apartments in big cities. It turns out a slob in an apartment uses less energy than a saint in a free-standing house. But the latter has a much higher resale value, a much higher worth as measured by the standards of the Roman property code.

I then looked at intentional communities, people who choose to live together. I again standardized the units to BTUs. That analysis was a bit more complex, because residential and com-

mercial get all mixed together, and there is (sometimes) a lot of firewood involved. But I took the time to make the numbers as accurate as they could be. The results were stunning. The average energy use in intentional communities ranged from nine percent up to near 60 percent of the American average. I couldn't believe it. The two ranges of numbers didn't even overlap. The contrast between the far extremes of the two groups of people—from nine percent up to 140 percent—was staggering. In each of these groups, everyone was on-grid, using all of the hot water and electricity they chose. The winner—the group of people with nine percent energy use—inhabited none other than the strawbale house I had retrofitted. I just couldn't believe it.

The per-capita expense to build my strawbale retrofit was easy. I knew how much money I had spent. It was \$14,500 per person. So for \$14,500 per person, I built housing that was, by my estimation, superior in a social sense, and used a small fraction of the total energy normal Americans used. I was sure that all the people in the US who were concerned about environmental issues, or concerned about providing affordable housing, would be thrilled to hear these revelations.

That was 2007. I self-published a book called *Culture Change*. (Seven years later the book was picked up by a publisher, expanded and professionally edited, and retitled *Integrated Activism*. It is available through North Atlantic Publishers.) I printed some books and stuffed them in a backpack. I got a folding bicycle, and began a tour of the United States. I did loops, up in the northeast and south. Then a big loop north and west, down the west coast, across the southern part of the country. I carried a small computer and did a slideshow. I went on the radio and got articles in local media when I could.

Both books focus on the impact of ecology on economy, and economy on social values and politics. The upshot is that democracy—including most especially how our society treats women and racial minorities—is closely tied to economic changes. The bottom line is that a highly polarized economy is incompatible with democracy. Economically empowered communities could assure democracy into the indefinite future.

I had found it. The solution to climate change and environmental decline more generally, providing affordable housing, and building a foundation for a future democratic society, all lie in wrapping strawbales around cooperative homes, and building more resilient society with economically strong communities (using the word in the broader sense) as its foundation. The latter point is a large one, I know. But it is clear—we build democracy

from the ground up, not the top down. I sold enough books to buy the next bus ticket mostly. I enjoy public speaking.

Since that time, there has been no measurable impact from those efforts. My work has resulted in little that I can see, and the corporations continue to rise. Most of those little bookstores and community centers are gone now, eaten by Amazon. Those same liberals who came and heard my speeches get their boxes in the mail. Academic ideas are far more important in the mind of middle class people than the world that is built with your hands.

I couldn't travel forever. I don't enjoy the traveling part, though I do like to talk to people. I came home. I am a good organizer. I had organized some successful campaigns locally, sometimes against long odds. My friends were polite, but the arms-length social norms of mainstream America have always been foreign to me. It seems most people are either accustomed to an extremely truncated social network, or burn quite a lot of gasoline to drive all over. I tried to stay engaged, but I was increasingly alienated. I very much enjoy growing fruit. The half acre around my straw-bale house became a closely planted orchard.

I have tried to discuss the magic of cooperative housing based on conservationist design with my friends who work on affordable housing issues. To build housing at \$14,500 per capita? That's crazy cheap by American standards. And it happens to achieve environmental goals that are supposed to be 50 years away. You would think they would notice.

Many cities in the United States have a "housing crisis" at this point, meaning simply that the average person working an ordinary job cannot afford "decent" housing. This point was brought home by a local hero around here, Barbara Ehrenreich. She is well educated, and morally concerned. She wrote a book, *Nicked and Dimed*. The book was a report on a time in her life when she set aside her academic credentials, and went out and tried to earn a living working ordinary jobs. She waited tables and what not. She told her story, and the stories of the friends she made along the way. The book is well-written. She found that she could afford some of what she needed, but securing a place to live—an apartment or a house of her own—working for straight-up working class wages was nearly impossible. I read the book, and then I was thinking, since when is it a God-given right that everyone should have their own private house or private apartment? I know that Americans think it is, but God never said that.

Cooperative housing solves a whole lot of problems all at once. The catch is that if poor people do it, then rich people don't want to go near it. One can see that with bicycles. In some parts of the US, only poor people ride bicycles. Government agencies in those areas do not invest in bicycle infrastructure. Cyclists are

harassed, pushed to the margins. In those areas where rich people ride bikes, then the public investment in bicycle infrastructure is quite the opposite. All the smiling people bike around happily.

I think it is safe to say that cooperative housing is already stigmatized as something for poor people. The bottom line is that, under the Roman property code, *status as a respectable American is based on an inexorably ecologically destructive lifestyle*. That is not a separate "issue" from social justice. Renewable energy systems in the context of a society based on the Roman property code only make the level of destruction worse. We are heading toward a time when many people are going to die. Putting more people on the train of middle class aspirations instead of trying to stop it doesn't make sense when the train is headed for a cliff.

In 2009, some friends and I starting working on the idea of building a community that was 100 percent energy self-sufficient. In 2010, we were able to buy a bedraggled clearcut near a small town. Off we went. A couple of years later, a publisher picked up my book. That was the fulfillment of a lifetime ambition. The local book festival is well-known, attracting many famous authors. They wouldn't let me in when I self-published. Then when a publisher picked up my book, they did. I went up on stage with an academic on a two-person panel that was "facilitated" by the worst mediator I have ever seen in my life. A few of my friends came. More people came to see the academic. His thesis was narrow, uncreative, and completely futile, but it did fit a narrative of "if we just regulate the corporations more, everything will be fine." No mention of anything other than government action. The mediator tried to dominate the presentation. It was the fulfillment of a lifetime dream—to publish and be heard—and the biggest single disappointment of my life.

Academics need fluffy verbiage, telling us that the work done by ordinary people each and every day with their hands is of no

Cooperative housing solves so many problems. The catch? If poor people do it, then the rich don't want to.



House stucco first and second coat.

consequence. The working class has been completely denied any sense of agency, any sense that what they do each and every day dominates our political future. They are deprived of agency because both the right and the educated left tells us each and every day that the ideas, policies, and attitudes of educated people matter, and the economic activity of working people does not. Everyone believes that ideas matter, and how we live in a material sense does not. If you study anthropology and history with open eyes, the truth is not hard to see. But truth seems to matter little. What matters is pretty clothing.

Under the Roman property code, the rules of dwelling function as the chains of slavery. In looking at that strawbale retrofit, I cannot help but be struck by the fact that the straw cost less than the paneling (that I took down). But straw—at least historically—breaks the rules we inherited from the Roman property code. It is something poor people use—lumpy walls made of organic materials. These decisions have nothing to do with cost or ease of construction, and everything to do with arbitrary symbols of social status. Heating and cooling buildings accounts for over 40 percent of climate change emissions. That could have been brought to near zero, for far lower costs than what we have spent to build the houses we have. The problem is the focus on symbols of social status takes overwhelming precedence over environmental impact.

Will that change now that climate change is getting so much attention? Not anytime soon. Tens of thousands of people have heard me talk about the extraordinary impacts of marrying cooperative living and renewable energy. The measurable impact has been near nil. Instead, our environmental movements continue to focus on industrial “renewable” energy systems—batteries, electric cars, adding solar decorations to existing, sparsely occu-

ried structures. It would be hard to calculate the percentage of the global population who can or ever will afford an electric car. It is only a few percentage points, that is for sure. (I can't afford one.) If we define environmentalism as something only a few percentage points of humanity can afford, we have taken something good and made it into something evil.

The marriage of cooperative use and renewable energy is the only thing that stands between us and a complete ecological holocaust. That will never be embraced by the middle and upper classes because it challenges the basis of their wealth. They will also continue to reject the very basic understanding that democracy is built by the hands of working people in self-determined communities, not in marbled hallways. But you, the young who see through smokescreen, I can offer you here the practical advice about how and what to do. Living cooperatively is the key to our survival. But it requires skills many older people do not have and are not willing to learn. You must take up leadership. 🐦

Alexis Zeigler was raised on a self-sufficient farm in Georgia. He has lived all of his adult life in intentional community. He has worked as a green builder, environmental activist, and author. His previous book, Integrated Activism, explores the connections between ecological change, politics, and cultural evolution. This article is adapted from Chapter Three of his new book, Empowering Communities: A Practical Guide to Energy Self-Sufficiency and Stopping Climate Change (Ecodem Press, 2021), available from conev.org. The book is dedicated “to Greta Thunberg and the student protest movement. You have looked beyond the self-deceptions of your parents’ generation. Now it is time to focus on a persistent and systematic effort to build a better world.”



Marxist Ecology

By Yana Ludwig

I live in a community that has anti-capitalism as a main focus. Last year we did permaculture design for the property, and one of the interesting questions that someone posed at one point was, “How might a Marxist ecologist view our community?”

As socialists who are also communitarians, we ask several layers of questions on a regular basis. One layer is made up of all the same challenges and inquiries all communities have at some point: How do we resolve conflicts fairly and with compassion for each other’s struggles? What projects do we prioritize? How do we deal with different food needs for common meals? How do we get the work done?

But what makes our situation somewhat unique is that each of these questions is also shot through with big political, socioeconomic, and interpersonal threads as well. We want to know why the oldest white guy feels such horrifying—and seemingly singular—pressure to be responsible for making the money work, and how much that patterning is embedded in both patriarchy and class oppression. We want to know what the best systems are to value our 21-year-old’s labor as just as much as our 53-year-old’s, and how to not default to what capitalism has taught us about competing constantly with everyone around us for both survival scraps and respect. And yes, we want to know how a Marxist ecologist would view both our relationships with each other and our relationship as a collective to the land.

That conversation during our permaculture planning yielded a few pieces that have continued to echo in our conversation. On the good side, we feel more grounded than ever in seeing our “ownership” of this property as a lever to move resources, labor, and attention out of the standard real estate market and build a safety net for working class and poor people (and in our case, people with disabilities) that results in real security. We also see permaculture primarily through the lens of labor-saving, and secondarily as a food-security practice. So being owners of property is, for us, owning the means of production and a potential step toward working-class liberation.

On the bad side, we are more sobered than ever about what it means to be a group of predominantly white people living on stolen land. Permaculture is an attempt to return us to a kind of deeply relational way of being on land.... But our people wiped out the people who didn’t need workshops to embody that. How do we work with that legacy? Is doing permaculture on the land enough, or do we also need to be active politically to decolonize everything? And is true decolonization—not just mental exercises but genuinely returning power and land and integrity to indigenous people—even possible while still occupying this land?

Two of the traits of colonialism are a profound alienation from the land, and the dehumanization of others, which can often be expressed in what a Marxist might call abusive labor practices. We can take steps to dismantle both of these in community, but it needs to be done with intentionality and careful consideration, with planning and deep work for worldview shifts. The potential to use this house to gather people together for that work was one of the things we identified as a positive leverage point.

Seeing humans as *part of* the system (a value which both permaculture and indigenous frameworks hold strongly) is a big first step for us here. And it goes along with seeing both labor and land as communally held and shared resources, rather than individually held, controlled, or even “owned” at all. (See the companion article, “Sharing Resources Well,” excerpted from *The Cooperative Culture Handbook*, for more exploration of this.)

Since we are white people trained in capitalism, I expect our attempts to implement this will be decidedly clunky. I’m grateful that the skills of observation and the ethic of making small changes and seeing what happens are core to permaculture. I suspect we will be doing a lot of both!

A Marxist ecologist, we decided, would see both the potential and the deep internal contradictions of our community.

They would also likely be amused and skeptical about our sense of urgency, which is another trait of colonial and white supremacist culture. Ecological time and political struggle time are both long games. Our impatience about things not yet working, and not yet being fully embodied after a mere three years on this land, is neither reasonable nor healthy, and if we had our imaginary Marxist ecologist at the dinner table with us, I imagine them saying, “Slow down. Breathe. This fight will take a while. These changes come through multiple cycles, not all at once.”

I imagine they would bring us back to our bodies and urge us to focus on the material world as much as the social world that we are prone to getting caught up in. They would remind us to extend the solidarity in our community’s name to solidarity with the bees and chickens and antelope, and to the water that rarely comes and the wind that rarely stops.

They would, again, say, “Breathe.” 🌿

Yana Ludwig is a founding member of the Solidarity Collective in Laramie Wyoming, and a member of Southeast Wyoming’s Democratic Socialists of America. She is the author of Together Resilient: Building Community in the Age of Climate Disruption and co-author of The Cooperative Culture Handbook. Yana serves on the Board of Directors of the Foundation for Intentional Community and is a longtime trainer and consultant for the movement.

1. See coco-net.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Coco-WhiteSupCulture-ENG4.pdf

Sharing Resources Well

By Yana Ludwig and Karen Gimnig

The following is an edited excerpt from *The Cooperative Culture Handbook* by Yana Ludwig and Karen Gimnig; one of 26 “Keys” to developing sustainable, cooperative culture in our lives and our groups. Find it at ic.org/handbook (receive \$5 discount with the code SHANDBOOK).

Sharing in Mainstream Culture

A surprising amount of American law exists simply to protect property rights and wealth. This makes sense in light of societal values and goals. Owning your own home is a classic sign of success. It never occurs to us that *access* to things could be achieved by anything other than ownership. This is a manifestation of the individualism that is so pervasive in our culture that most of us don’t think to question it.

Thus, we are obsessed with *owning* everything we need or want. The value of individual ownership was amplified by a misleading but famous economic study articulating the “tragedy of the commons,” which describes the way common property may be misused or exhausted without systems that ensure equitable distribution. We see a lot of that play out in companies polluting our collective environment without taking responsibility for that, and sometimes find ourselves as individuals needing to take more than we give because we are not paid enough to survive without doing so.

Our mainstream culture embodies a lot of the downfalls that *The Tragedy of the Commons* described. The push for personal ownership is in part an attempt to not have to deal with our perception of other people abusing the commons: if I am in sole control, I’m the only one who gets to decide how this thing will be used.

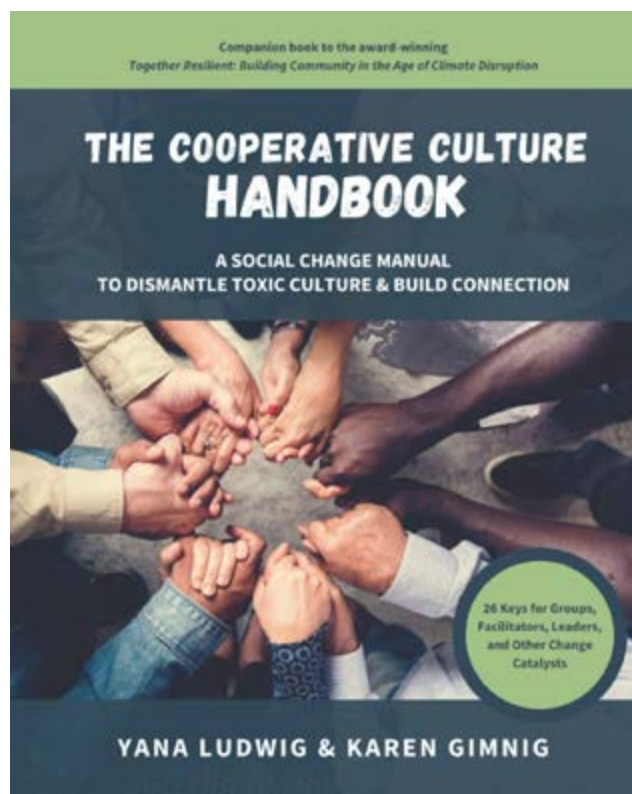
Sharing in Counter Culture

The opposite extreme is sharing everything without customs or rules for equitable shared use, a practice of “anything goes.” “Anything goes” leads to nothing going well for any of us. Unfortunately, we have seen real examples of this in counter culture spaces where people feel very nervous about being seen as controlling others. Rather than working through differences, everyone simply takes what they need when they need it and no one can count on shared resources still being there when someone else needs them. This isn’t secure for anyone.

Sharing in Cooperative Culture

Fortunately for us, *The Tragedy of the Commons* was challenged by Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom not too long after it came out. Ostrom added significant nuance to our understanding by finding a lot of examples where sharing did go well and resources were not depleted, and documenting what made it work. People are actually capable of sharing well with each other, within certain parameters. Capitalism encourages disregard for the commons, but that indifference is neither necessary nor inevitable. The key to sharing resources

Capitalism encourages disregard for the commons, but that indifference is neither necessary nor inevitable.



well is clear agreements, boundaries, and accountability.

Sharing supports stronger relationships, and a sense of interdependence. Frequently a borrowed tool comes with great advice about how to use it. The interaction around the sharing is the kind of touchpoint that leads to increased knowing of one another, slowly building intimacy and safety and inviting vulnerability.

Sharing resources well is the cultural element that offers the most potential gain in terms of ecological sustainability. This is most easily seen in the context of ecovillages and income-sharing intentional communities that emphasize the sharing of common spaces, cars, food buying, meal preparation, and alternative energy equipment, among other things. The social skills needed for and built by sharing open the door for significant reduction in consumption of both energy and stuff, and at a cost of markedly less money and time. 🌱

Yana Ludwig is a founding member of the Solidarity Collective in Laramie Wyoming, and a member of Southeast Wyoming's Democratic Socialists of America. She is the author of Together Resilient: Building Community in the Age of Climate Disruption and co-author of The Cooperative Culture Handbook. Yana serves on the Board of Directors of the Foundation for Intentional Community and is a longtime trainer and consultant for the movement.

Karen Gimnig walks with communities, organizations, and teams as facilitator and guide, and brought all of that to co-authoring The Cooperative Culture Handbook. Her ability to hold space, foster hope, reflect clarity, and invite vulnerability enables groups to strengthen relationships and achieve mission. She lives in Anacortes, Washington amid family, beaches, and evergreen trees.



Race, Class, and Sharing

There are important social justice considerations around sharing. It's easier to share when you have things in common with the group members. Differences like race and class bring up a lot of feelings around sharing property. Noticing who you are comfortable asking to borrow from or lending something to can reveal unchallenged biases. It can also be a lot easier to lend stuff out when you have a lot or have the money to replace things if something gets broken or lost. On the other hand, people with fewer resources are often much more used to sharing as a survival technique. In short: it's complicated. Sometimes you may need to have sticky, hard conversations about race and class in order to create sharing systems that truly work, or to understand why someone isn't interested in participating.

Self-Check

Am I attached to objects that I own? Do I feel uncomfortable borrowing or lending? Do I worry more about loss if someone misuses shared things than I think about the gain of more available resources? Do I have a bunch of stuff that I rarely use, particularly the same stuff my neighbor has and rarely uses? Does sharing happen most within subsets of the group, and if so, can I discern where the lines are between people who will and won't share with each other?

Exercise: Inventory of Sharing Potential

Often our sharing of resources is limited by lack of awareness or by systems that make sharing more difficult than it needs to be.

Instructions:

1. Make a list of resources that are commonly owned by your team or community, but rarely used or underused.
2. For each item determine why it is underused:
 - a. People don't know about it.
 - b. It's physically hard to access (locked up, on a high shelf, etc.).
 - c. It's systemically hard to access the thing (sign-up, it moves around, etc.).
 - d. There are too many of the thing, either commonly or privately owned.
 - e. The person or people who manage the thing are unpleasant to deal with.
 - f. The cost of using the thing is too high (cleaning, fees, etc.).
 - g. It's not really needed by our group.
 - h. Other.
3. Pick three to five things from your list and consider solutions that would result in more sharing, or better use of shared space. Consider in particular if another team or connected community might benefit from using it.
4. Pick one to three solutions to act on.

—YL and KG

Exploring Cooperative Futures, Part Two: WORK IS MORE THAN A JOB

By Paul Freundlich

There was a time when a peasant economy consumed what it grew or tended, and otherwise bartered. Life was hard for most people, and work was simply what family units did to survive.

Modern economic reality is primarily urban. It has depended on enough jobs, treating extraction like our personal pantry, with accumulation leading to expanding wealth. That expectation is increasingly unrealistic as the gap between wealth and poverty deepens.

For whole classes of people, largely defined by race, ethnicity, and zip codes, the concept of meaningful work is an oxymoron subsumed in the hustle to find jobs that support survival. Yet, to the extent community exists, there is a virtually unlimited amount of meaningful work to be done: child care, elder care, infrastructure repair. If we are in a job and disparities crisis now, so were we in the Great Depression when the New Deal created the Civilian Conservation Corps.

A friend from my Peace Corps days, Roger Landrum, was inspired by that experience, and spent most of his life promoting National Service, with some success: if we only had the political will, programs like AmeriCorps, Job Corps, Teacher Corps could be cobbled together with military service. A mandatory year or two of contributing citizenship would go a long way to establishing a society which speaks a common language of participation. I know that my Army experience as a draftee, while not something I embarked on with great enthusiasm, exposed me to a diversity of class, race, and ethnicity

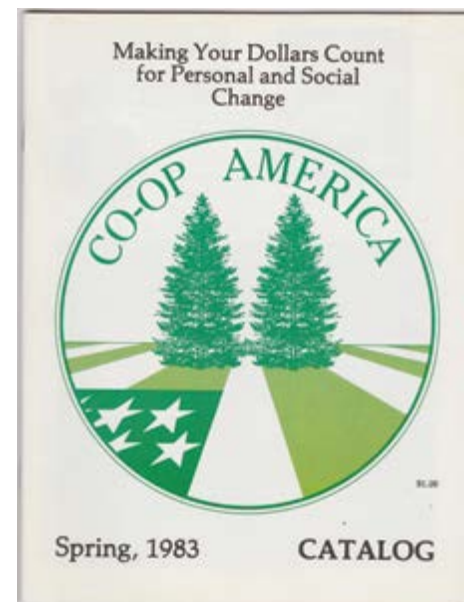
that made me a better citizen.

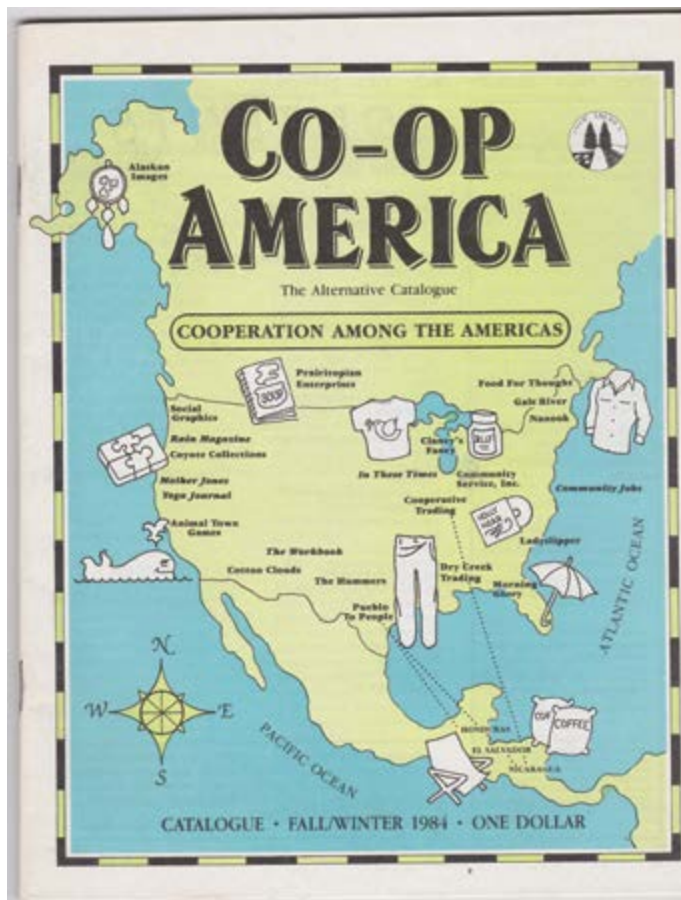
Top down or bottom up, plenty of tools are available. The summer of 1977, I crossed this great land via Greyhound bus, gathering material for an issue of COMMUNITIES. My itinerary included cooperatives, right-livelihood businesses, and the New School for Democratic Management. At NSDM I would be teaching a class on *Burnout*, a subject familiar to the overworking and underpaid harbingers of social change who flocked to San Francisco for some answers that avoided the usual capitalist, hierarchical traps.

The best shorthand for NSDM's learning environment was the insight that in traditional business, worker compensation was booked as a cost, while in employee-owned operations, with profits/surplus going to the worker/owners, it was a benefit.



Photo courtesy of Paul Freundlich





Come then children of the marches
 Veterans of tear gas and fallen arches
 Co-op struggles across this land
 Come to San Francisco with a notebook in your hand

Another faculty was my housemate, Lew Bowers, a recent graduate of Yale's School of Organization and Management, who put his education into practice at the New Haven Food Coop, with its 5,000 members and \$1.5 million annual sales. Reading over Lew's and a colleague's article for COMMUNITIES 40 years later, I'm impressed with how comprehensively they covered the issues that spell success or failure. Lew went on to head economic development for several medium-sized cities. In retirement, he had helped put together an attractive, successful housing co-op in Portland, Oregon, where he and his wife, Susan (another ex-housemate), reside, and so the beat goes on.

When my wife, Margaret, and I visited them a few years ago, the lapse of 40 years was mainly irrelevant. We knew each other with a confidence of shared experience and values. Susan and Margaret are both Nurse Practitioners, and it would be fair to say that the four of us represent the middle path of community, moving relatively smoothly between professional work that's consistent with our values, and a resilient part of communities that reassure us that life matters.

Looking back at our younger selves, although there would be many choices along the way, those that would fundamentally define us had already been made: you don't usually get into Ivy League grad schools by happenstance. As for the participants

in the intense learning experience at NSDM, unlike many formal academic programs, there was not a wide distinction between teachers and students. Making a go of any small business is challenging. Throw in issues of political correctness and we were all on the edge of discovery and failure.

Consider that the modality of cooperatives is encapsulated in the mantra of equality: *one member, one vote*. Trouble is (gee wiz) that if the denial of hierarchy also deprioritizes wisdom gained through experience, and everyone is on the same level, every decision becomes a debate. Relying on everyone's good sense to balance a cultural norm against practical deadlines is dependent on coworkers with good sense.

For example, there was a restaurant I helped start, "Down to Earth," with a good menu and dedicated staff. They were open six days a week, and on the seventh they processed. Eventually, decisions on a widening range of dietary and procedural issues spread into the daily grind to the point where staff was huddling in the kitchen while impatient patrons waited to be served.

Looking ahead, the COVID-19 shutdown has been erratically devastating to an economy, and the impact of the pandemic on work life has been monumental, in ways that are likely to continue.

Yet the changes have been coming for a while: automation and cheap global sourcing in the manufacturing sector; artificial intelligence, computers, and the internet in white collar jobs. The redistribution of where people work has also affected how they feel about their work. In the wake of Covid, many more jobs will continue to be performed from home and much of routine shopping, service, and healthcare will be face-to-face-time on smartphones. Transportation and the primacy of automobiles, even oil-stingy hybrids and electrics, will be rethought.

The resistance to traditional workplaces had already supported the creation of collaborative workplaces which became a lively base for community and innovation. One of the most original and widespread (on all continents) were the *Impact Hubs* which felt like an ongoing, entrepreneurial jam session. Each of the over 40 autonomous sites had dozens to hundreds of members who showed up, plugged in their laptops, made plans, hung out till their ideas took off or fell flat.

As these small-scale, community-based initiatives were taking off, the sensationally over-leveraged (to the tune of billions) WeWork operation appropriated all the best practices and seized market share. If that competition wasn't enough, along came the necessary separations of COVID-19. Some variation will be back as folks need the stimulation of collaborative workspaces. I made a video about the Hubs, focused on San Francisco, Amsterdam, Seattle, and Madrid, which is available on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=0eXKY11Fnfl (40-minute version) and www.youtube.com/watch?v=3drG_ioKbvg (10-minute version).

A more philosophical question remains: what do we consider work? So long as work and jobs were more or less synonymous, an assumed, parallel relationship existed between productivity and pay. But what happens when that agreement is obsolete? Even worse is the misdirection which equates productivity with profitability. The vast global financial system delivers to its play-

ers, while the rest of humanity is lucky to get fast food at the drive-in.

The emerging service economy works only if we redefine productive work, something that communities and cooperatives are very good at. Take childcare, traditionally the unpaid domain of mothers. Take the Covid-inspired designation of “essential workers” which suddenly recognized that there was an entire class of poorly paid, but absolutely critical workers who made the wheels go round: not only physicians and nurse practitioners, but less compensated workers right down to minimum wage folks who daily risked their lives. That the least compensated jobs were usually defined by race, ethnicity, and gender made it even more shameful.

At intentional communities and cooperatives, there tends to be an equality of recognition for necessary work. When we set up Co-op America, it was as a worker cooperative. The differential in pay between the Executive Director and the newest hire was maxed at three-to-one. Half the Board of Directors was composed of worker-elected representatives, with the other half elected respectively by Business and Individual members. For 40 years we’ve been able to attract talented staff who contribute their skills and idealism.

Understanding that the widening gap in wealth is unsustainable in a democracy has never been the exclusive province of intellectuals, but the argument has become more sophisticated. The Union Movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries fought for and won the right to organize against the exploitation of labor. There even was some truth to a de facto partnership with capital—for a while. The control, however, was always with ownership. Jobs migrated to parts of the world where exploitation of labor and resources resulted in cheap production and a competitive edge.

Relegating the exploitation of race and gender to the dust heap of history remains a dream deferred. Slavery of African Americans gave way to de facto enshrinement of economic prejudice. Pay and promotions for women still lag far behind. When China entered the game as the world’s largest manufacturer of practically everything, the contradictions between short-term, competitive advantage and long-term consequences have been taken to a new level. Yet even China is aware that the environment is spiraling out of control.

Redesigning the definition and compensation of work will be a tussle for capitalism, but the Biden administration, prodded by the Warren/Sanders wing of the Dems, is slipping accommodations to fair distribution of wealth into stimulus legislation. Focusing on taxation and raising the minimum wage are worthy steps in the right direction—towards an economy where the work which allows us to cohere as an intuited community is fairly distributed and rewarded.

Valuing work which contributes to sustainability is a natural conclusion for most cooperative endeavors, and putting that value into practice is job one. 🐦

Paul Freundlich has been an active participant and creator in the development of cooperative, communitarian, and sustainable alternatives for 60 years. Highlights include filmmaking around the world for the Peace Corps in the '60s; participating in the building of a network of alternative institutions in New Haven and editing of COMMUNITIES in the '70s; founding both Co-op America and Dance New England in the '80s; in the '90s, helping guide the CERES Coalition as a Board Member; in the 2000s, Chair of the Stakeholder Council of the Global Reporting Initiative; in the '10s, on the Managing Board of a long-term homeplace for communitarian ventures, and continuing on the Board of Green America as President Emeritus. Paul has authored dozens of films, videos, articles, and other writing. He lives in Connecticut with his wife, Margaret Flinter; both of them commune with a wide range of friends and colleagues via Zoom (for now).

The emerging service economy works only if we redefine productive work, something that communities and cooperatives are very good at.



Restoring Ecosystems and Human Communities

By Susan Jennings



Photos courtesy of Susan Jennings

The UN has declared 2021-2030 the decade of ecosystem restoration in recognition of both the peril of degraded landscapes and the possibility of their regeneration. Degraded landscapes, which account for 75 percent of the planet's land areas, contribute to the development of novel viruses, disrupt water and climate cycles, and imperil human and ecosystem health. These planetary challenges call for a great transition, a new-old way of being in community with the natural world, and with one an-

other. We are already seeing signs of this changing dynamic.

Our ever-increasing global practices of tree planting, rewilding, eco-restoration, and rejuvenation of waterways and wildlife passages are inspiring hope, replication, and a deepening understanding of the symbiotic nature of human and natural communities. And as our understanding of the interconnection between human life and the planet continues to grow, individuals and communities are exploring how the principles of restoration—

including diversity, collaboration, and working within natural boundaries—can likewise restore human communities.

Restoring and strengthening communities has been a focus of the Arthur Morgan Institute for Community Solutions (AMICS) since its founding, as Community Service, in 1940, on the eve of America's entrance into WWII. By that time, its founder, Arthur E. Morgan, had already engineered a flood control system for Dayton, Ohio, transformed Antioch College, served as the first chair of the Tennessee Valley Authority, informed Gandhi's rural education initiative, written several books, and founded an alternative currency. He saw Community Service as his culminating legacy, however, because he increasingly believed that the small community was the seedbed of cultural and democratic values. Though urbanization and globalization were in their infancy, he was remarkably prescient about what they might mean for human agency and community.

Morgan was a founder of the Community Land Trust movement, and his heirs were cofounders of North Carolina's Celo Community, Ohio's Raven Rocks community, and Yellow Springs' Vale Community. Bob Swann, who took a correspondence course that Morgan created for conscientious objectors who were imprisoned, later cofounded the Schumacher Center for a New Economics.

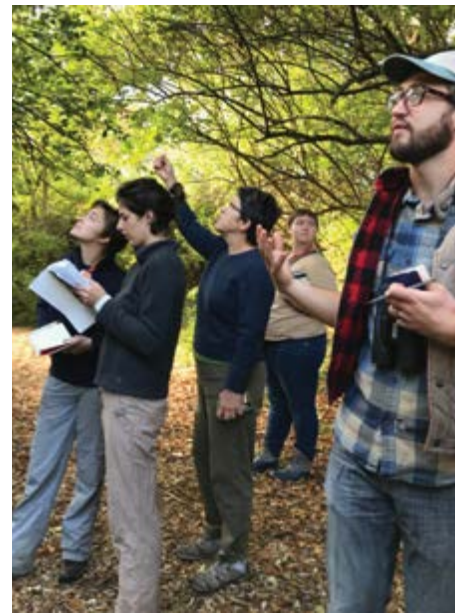
Over its 80 years, Community Solutions has explored, through conferences and writings, films and our online presence, the chal-

lenges of technology, the benefits of simplicity and cooperation, and the power and possibility of community. Community Solutions has also advocated for the environment through films produced by Pat Murphy and Faith Morgan about Passive House building and about Cuba's transition to sustainable agricultural practices, *The Power of Community: How Cuba Survived Peak Oil*.

I came to know Community Solutions through attending the organization's Peak Oil conferences in 2007 and 2008. They were seminal events for me. In my work as a university sustainability professional, I had often felt constrained by a definition of the work that ended at renewable energies and recycling. At Community Solutions' conferences, the conversations spurred by speakers like David Korten, Richard Heinberg, and Judy Wicks stirred me. For the first time, I recognized that my own visions of a sustainability platform that was nested in spiritual, historical, and political understandings were shared by an international community.

When I came to Yellow Springs in 2014 as its Executive Director, it was with the promise that I could bring these broader visions to my work here. In 2017, this promise manifested in the purchase at auction of 128 acres of conventional farmland on the outskirts of the village. We named the farm Agraria and established it as a Center for Regenerative Practice. As an evolution of the ideas of sustainability, regeneration implies a re-visioning of the many systems within which we operate. Everything we do





at Agraria is through the lens of regeneration: regenerating soil and biodiversity on our farm; regenerating food and economic systems in our bioregion; and regenerating communities through our education, media, and conferences.

Our four areas of practice include conservation, research, education, and local food systems. In each of these areas, we look to work across the traditional siloes of institutions and philosophies, seeking to evolve both practice and practitioners.

Like much of the land surrounding us, the fields we bought had been farmed conventionally for several decades and the soil was depleted and relatively devoid of life. Over the past four years we have built soil and biodiversity through transitioning to organic and regenerative practices, such as the use of compost and other amendments, covercropping, and diverse plantings, including the planting of perennials. Our regenerative farming and forestry practices also include the coppicing of locusts for fence posts, the development of a food forest, and bioswales created in collaboration with The Permaculture Institute. Later this year we plan to develop a silvopasture site for rotationally grazed sheep.

Our signature conservation project is a partnership with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), their first project that combines agriculture and conservation. TNC is remeandering Jacoby Creek, which runs through Agraria, restoring wetlands, and replacing invasive species with native species. Fifty-five acres of Agraria are included in the restoration plan and a further 25 are included in an agricultural easement. Paths, signs, and seating areas will be incorporated throughout the site to educate visitors about our

practices and why we have adopted them.

Concurrent with our restoration plans, we have partnered with several institutions on research, including The Land Institute in Salina, Kansas. They sent us several slips of *Silphium*, a perennial sunflower that can be used as a pollinator resource and for forage, soil building, and oilseed production. We are investigating which ecotypes of *Silphium* perform best in this region, and in which kinds of soils, including wet soils, which will become increasingly problematic as the climate warms. We are also conducting research in glyphosate migration when used in honeysuckle eradication and, with our partner farmer, looking at the efficacy of various soil amendments. As with our other activities, a prime consideration is involving students of all ages in our research, including third graders who have explored soil health by recording insects in the soil of one of our fields, and seventh graders who investigated macroinvertebrates in Jacoby Creek.

Agraria is just down the road from the Yellow Springs High School and within driving distance of 13 institutions of higher education, including Central State University, a historically Black university (HBCU) and 1890 land grant institution with whom we have a comprehensive memorandum of understanding. As a result, we are uniquely positioned to support the inclusion of regenerative practices into K-12 and collegiate curricula, along with research and service opportunities. Our fields and wooded areas give children a chance to climb trees, dig in the dirt, build forts and fires, explore wildlife, and measure the diversity in water and soil. A 2019 Soils for Life grant from the Ohio EPA helped us

to train educators from 35 school districts and brought students from several districts to Agraria for field trips, before the Covid shutdowns halted them.

As with many of our colleagues, the months since the Covid shutdowns have been ones of challenge and reflection. It's clear that this time is one of quickening of collapse and transition, and that those of us who have been nurtured in the narratives of simplicity, diversity, and relocalization are called to bring our skillsets and understandings to bear in our own work and in our collaborations with others.

In 2020, our education team created the *Big Map Out* project to help homebound K-2 students get outside to map their backyards, neighborhood parks, and communities. We also created nature connection videos to encourage children to stay physically active and attend to seasonal changes even while cooped up. We've continued outside nature school offerings in small groups and are also collaborating with several universities to offer internships and classes.

As traditional education is increasingly challenged structurally and financially to provide meaningful experiences for students, we are committed to exploring the kinds of hands-on skill sets that empower students to have agency in their own and their

community's life. Students of all ages at Agraria have learned the importance of regeneration through tending permaculture sites and bluebird boxes, how to partner with nature through research into renewable energy and water catchment systems, and the power and practice of seed saving. Agraria is also a demonstration and learning site for homesteaders and small-scale farmers.

Annual conferences have been a signature project of the organization throughout our history. We have sponsored over 100 conferences on issues as diverse as appropriate technology, the importance of elders in community, the economics of happiness, and soil, food, and plant medicine. Moving conferences and workshops online has paradoxically broadened our impact, with people from across the planet engaging in presentations, conversations, and skillsharing in artistic and hometending practices.

Last fall, we also hosted our first annual Black Farming conference, exploring the hidden history of Black Farming in Ohio, cooperative development, and the needs of Black farmers who have disproportionately suffered land and business losses over the last century. The conference led to the development of a Black Farming Network and newsletter and the institution this year of a regenerative farmer fellowship for area Black, Indigenous, and People of Color working primarily in community spaces. These



trainings and networks are also engaged in important conversations about the need for collaborative growing and food exchange outside of our monetary systems. In addition, we are exploring whether our land trust history can support the local and regional development of a Black Farming commons.

We further explored Black Farming in our new Grounded Hope podcast series, partially funded by the Ohio Humanities Council. Other recent podcasts include a focus on Regenerative Agriculture, Agroforestry, and animals in agriculture. These podcasts are also paired with resources for educators, available at groundedhope.org.

Our support of the regional food system has also expanded in reach and importance. Before the pandemic, many Americans thought of food insecurity as being the challenge of the very poor. But the Covid lockdowns brought the sight of millions of gallons of milk being dumped down the drain and thousands of pigs and chickens euthanized while demand at food banks was spiking. It was the first of many recent traumatic events waking us up to the fragility of all the systems on which we rely—food, health, economic, and political.

Southwest Ohio, which boasts some of the best water and farmland in the world, is covered with corn and soy monocultures—with much of that turned into biofuels or animal feed and shipped overseas. Agriculture is the state's number one industry, yet only eight percent of the food that's eaten here is grown locally. At Agraria, we have the opportunity to reflect on food systems from the very local through the international level. Locally we are working on the regenerative growing and sharing of food through a Generous Gardeners program, through support of farmers' markets, through the development of a new urban agriculture center in South Springfield, a nearby urban food desert, and through collaborating on a revisioning of a regional food system.

As our recent conference speakers and partners David Korten, Vandana Shiva, and Helena Norberg-Hodge have highlighted,

there is a deep and symbiotic connection between the exodus of people from farm to city and the corporatization of the food system, decline of democracy, degradation of the environment, and loss of community agency. Food and seed sovereignty, development of local food and economic systems, and training people to grow their own food at multiple scales all rebuild our connection to the land and enhance not only individual but also community resilience.

Our June conference with Vandana Shiva and Dr. Drew Ramsey on Nourishing Life looks to broaden our understandings of health and especially the connection between human health and fresh food from healthy soil. Later this year, a retrospective on the work of Arthur Morgan will reflect on his legacy and the meaning of his work in this transformative time.

We will continue through our journals, videos, podcasts, and upcoming conferences to highlight the creativity arising across the planet as this great transition unfolds. The paths to two very divergent futures now present themselves more starkly than ever in our lifetimes—one toward increasing control and centralization and the other toward diversity, collaboration, and restoration. The health of the planet and all the beings who call it home depends on our collective ability to choose a path toward restoration, regeneration, and resilience. 🌱

Susan Jennings became Executive Director of the Arthur Morgan Institute for Community Solutions (AMICS) in 2014. Since that time, she has partnered with the AMICS board to implement a new strategic plan oriented toward the support of resilient communities. She also led AMICS in the 2017 purchase of Agraria, a 128-acre farm on the outskirts of Yellow Springs which is being developed into a Center for Regenerative Practice. Susan serves as the Chair of the Greater Dayton Conservation Fund, and on the national Council for Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching on behalf of Central State University. She also facilitates a Community Climate Resilience class for the University of Dayton's lifelong learning institute.



Native Wildlife vs. Cats and Dogs

By Briony Ryan

Photos courtesy of Michael Ney



This article first appeared in Eco Village Voice Issue #1 at ecovillagevoice.com.

“Dogs are the third-most-damaging mammal, placing dogs after cats and rodents as the world’s most damaging invasive mammalian predators.”¹

Crystal Waters is a permaculture village that is home to an abundance of native wildlife. It is here on 640 acres that residents live in harmony with this nature. A “no dogs and cats” policy and bylaw means that kangaroos, wallabies, and echidnas freely and safely roam the land during the day, while tawny frogmouths, microbats, antechinus, and phascogales enjoy the stillness of the night.

It has been recorded that in the Sunshine Coast region there are over 700 species of native animals—with some of these species being found only on the Sunshine Coast. According to the Sunshine Coast Council, out of these 700 species of native animals, 198 have been classified as “significant” because they are threatened by extinction; are not found anywhere else in the world; are not found either north or south of the Coast; and/or have a specific cultural heritage.

The protection of these native animals and their habitats is imperative, and here at Crystal Waters we are committed to

supporting this cause.

How does the exclusion of dogs and cats help this cause? Research has shown that there is a definite impact on native fauna from domestic dogs and cats. In November 2017, the Tweed Council adopted a Wildlife Protection Area Policy where Council can prohibit cats and dogs from public lands declared a “Wildlife Protection Area.” They state: “Council’s high conservation reserves located close to urban areas are most at risk, with many residences adjoining urban bushland owning a cat and/or dog.

“Native fauna are impacted by cats due to mortality, injury, or disease spread as a result of cat hunting during the day and at night. Hunting behaviours of cats can also impact on fauna by causing disturbance to breeding, foraging, and roosting.

“Susceptible fauna groups include: small to medium sized birds, particularly ground-nesting birds; small to medium sized arboreal mammals (gliders, possums); bats (insectivorous and blossom/fruit bats); small to medium sized ground dwelling mammals (planigales, bandicoots) and frogs, lizards, snakes, and insects. Similarly, native fauna are impacted from dogs due to mortality, injury, or disease spread resulting from dog attack.

“Dogs can also cause disturbance to and induce stress in fauna, can crush or eat the eggs of ground nesting birds, and similarly to cats, can impact on fauna by causing disturbance to breeding, foraging, and roosting. Susceptible fauna groups



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include: ground dwelling, roosting, and nesting birds; arboreal mammals that come to the ground to move between habitat areas (koalas, possums); ground dwelling mammals (bandicoots, echidnas, wallabies) and snakes and lizards."

A study done in the US by Benjamin Lenth et al., submitted to the City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks, "The Effects of Dogs on Wildlife Communities" (February, 2006), compared the activity levels of wildlife in areas that prohibited dogs with areas that allowed dogs. After measuring wildlife activity, researchers claim that "the presence of dogs along recreational trails correlated with altered patterns of habitat utilisation by several species."

Crystal Waters Permaculture Village is home to many native birds and wildlife and undoubtedly a number of significant species. The IUCN Red List has the brush-tailed phascogale "near threatened" and considered "vulnerable," and was last assessed in December 2012.

As urbanisation increases throughout our country, it is important for communities such as Crystal Waters to continue to have policies and bylaws to protect our native wildlife and their habitat. The idea that introduced predatory animals should have priority over this, seems unthinkable. However, it is a continued trend throughout general society to give greater value to domestic dogs and cats, and sadly, this trend is bringing about a reduction in number of our native wildlife.

Other ecovillages in Queensland have adopted the same "no dogs and cats" policy: villages such as Kookaburra Park in Gin Gin and The Ecovillage at Currumbin on the Gold Coast, with The Ecovillage at Currumbin successfully managing to secure a covenant through their local council to support this cause.

As the number of ecovillages with a "no dogs and cats" policy increases throughout Australia, a better understanding of the significant impact that domestic dogs and cats have on our unique native wildlife will hopefully grow too. The fight for our right to keep our communities free from dogs and cats must continue, as the future of our vulnerable wildlife depends on it. 🐾

After beginning her university studies in Media, Briony Ryan returned to her original love of creating, and began writing and illustrating children's books. She had her first book published in early 2020 and is working on more. Briony is a long-term resident at Crystal Waters Ecovillage in Australia, and originally wrote this article for Eco Village Voice (see ecovillagevoice.com).



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Canine Community and the Dog that Other Dogs Hate

By Sheryl Grassie

I often look at my life through the lens of having dogs. When I moved into my current house about a decade ago, a neighbor from across the alley came over to say “hello” and meet my two pups; he had a dog as well. “This is a very dog-friendly neighborhood,” he told me, “but there is one dog down the alley that all the other dogs hate.” I immediately envisioned a pit bull growling from behind a chain-link fence. The neighbor elaborated, “It’s a really nice dog, a big gentle doodle variety,” he continued, “but, mark my words, your dogs will hate him.” I guess he wanted to warn me about the known hazard in the neighborhood.

“My dogs love all dogs,” I said matter-of-factly, and in truth, I had often pondered getting a sign for my bigger dog Al that said, “I roll for cats,” he was so in love with other creatures. My two pups, both mixed breed rescues, were overly friendly and overly submissive, especially the younger one Zoe. A to Z, as they were affectionately called by people in the neighborhood, were a happy duo.

My family, having bred dogs (Keeshonds) while I was growing up, engendered in me some solid knowledge about dogs, and I have prided myself on extremely well-behaved pets. I also know the importance of socializing dogs and had trotted both Al and Zoe off to the local vet for puppy socialization classes right off the bat. With a penchant for the well-behaved, well-socialized creature, I kept my eye out for the “dog that all other dogs hated.” I was very curious.

In the meantime, we acclimated to our new neighborhood and made friends with both people and canines. A to Z would look forward to dogs walking past our house so they could greet and sniff, and people who would reach over the fence and pet them. However, there truly was one exception. Just as my neighbor had warned me, there was a dog that the other dogs seemingly detested, including mine. This poor creature, friendly as he appeared, elicited nothing but barks and snarls when he went past, and sadly did not seem to have a friend in the neighborhood.

I pondered this poor animal, who passed long ago and shall remain nameless. He was, as I believe all dogs are, essentially good and quite lovable. So why did all the other dogs dislike him so? Why was he shunned? This acrimony was well established when we moved in, and my dogs just seemed to follow suit. But dogs, like people, do not just automatically dislike others, something had to have caused the aversion. What had happened for so many neighborhood canines to turn on this one poor dog?

Slowly it dawned on me: he was not allowed by his owners to be friendly. He didn’t come to the fence to sniff as other dogs did, and

when out in the neighborhood his owners would not allow him to greet other dogs, nor did we ever see him at the off-leash park running around like so many of the other neighborhood canines. He didn’t have a fenced yard from which to make connections and lived most of the time indoors. He had been turned into a social outcast by the very people who loved him most and I felt extremely sorry for him. He endured a life of daily growling from most of his peers.

Some people don’t think dogs need other dogs, but I disagree. I was at a recent talk by renowned psychiatrist Dr. Henry Emmons who elaborated on the four pillars of good health: diet, exercise, sleep, and social connection, which all apply to dogs as well. Surprisingly, Dr. Emmons’ research indicates that social connection is the strongest determinant of good health and a happy life. Sadly, this rejected dog in my neighborhood died having never known what it was like to be close to other canines. On an

even sadder note, the family has gotten another dog and is instituting the same social isolation practices—no contact with other dogs.

I do not fully understand the need to isolate one’s pet, or the rationale behind this kind of control. Dogs by nature are pack animals and very social creatures; most people understand this. Isolation lessens the quality of life for both the animal and those around it. I feel fortunate that my dogs have had not only each other, but a whole community of people and dogs that sniff, and lick, and pet them. They know they are loved. My neighbor was right when he told me, “This is a very dog-friendly neighborhood.”

My older dog Al has been gone now for five years, and Zoe is well into her geriatric twilight, but they had good lives where they felt connected to others, both humans and canines. “The dog that other dogs hate” has been replaced by a younger version, and life goes on. Just as with humans, dogs need to feel part of a community and mine have been fortunate to live where they do. 🐾



Sheryl Grassie Ed.D. has maintained a private writing practice since 1997. She has taught writing and research at the graduate level and enjoys working with both authors and students on academic and nonfiction projects. She has a Bachelor’s degree in psychology from Macalester College, a Master’s degree in Clinical Psychology from Antioch University, and a Doctorate degree in Educational Leadership from the University of St. Thomas. She has authored, ghostwritten, and/or edited numerous books and articles related to a variety of topics. She resides in Minneapolis, Minnesota where she is the mother of three children, and an avocational potter.

The Farm: The First 50 Years

By Michael Traugot, Mary Ellen Bowen, Peter Schweitzer, with Pamela Hunt, Richard Schoenbrun, Carol Ann Nelson, Nancy Rhine Figallo, Michael O’Gorman, John Coate, Marilyn Friedlander, and David Frohman

Photos by David Frohman, Anita Whipple, Gerald Wheeler, Plenty International



© Gerald Wheeler

Founded as an intentional community 50 years ago near Summertown, Tennessee, The Farm now spans across three generations. The community became widely known around the world as a center for peace and reason, hard work, the spirit of cooperation, and outreach to people in need.

The Farm began in 1971 on 1,064 acres (which soon became 1,750 acres) with about 250 young adults, led by founder and hippie spiritual teacher Stephen Gaskin. We were motivated to apply the spiritual principles we were studying together in his classes in San Francisco to form a community based on peace and cooperation. We wanted to try to nudge the general society, then fractured and consumed by the Vietnam War and racism, in the direction of peace and justice. Our motto then was “Out to Save the World,” or at least our portion of it.

In the ensuing years, the community expanded rapidly until at the peak around 1981 close to 1,500 people were living

on the property, half of them children. The overloaded community got into large debt and then restructured, most of the residents leaving. About 200 adults, along with our children, stuck it out and paid off the debt in three years, 1984-87, thus assuring the continuation of the community. The population has now been steady for many years at about 200 adults, along with our children.

Today The Farm itself is an established and respected part of the surrounding community in southern middle Tennessee, and also the homeland and hub of a large network of Farm veterans, our families and associates, a community at large, dispersed around the country and around the world, many of whom are still activists working to have a positive influence in the world around them.

This article contains stories by long-time Farm veterans about the formation of the community and the lasting relationships



Photos © David Frohman

formed among the group of young dreamers who became The Farm. A common thread running through these stories is how the community-building skills learned on The Farm helped them accomplish what they have been able to do since those early days of community development on The Farm.

This collection of stories and photos is a project of The Farm Archive Library.

• • •

Pamela Hunt has been involved with The Farm Community for more than 50 years. She has delivered babies and taught midwifery at The Farm for more than 40 years. She writes about her first meeting with Stephen Gaskin in 1967, when a community like The Farm was still just a dream.

I was hitchhiking home from college one day and a friend

picked me up on his motorcycle. He said there were some students meeting at a teacher's house on Broderick Street. We went there, up three flights of stairs to the attic apartment, and met Stephen and Margaret Gaskin (Stephen's wife at the time), who were with six other students. We talked, smoking as we went. Margaret broke open a kilo and put it in the middle of a large round table and went to the kitchen area and put some brown rice on the stove to cook. She and I talked awhile about food and what you could do with brown rice. Lots.

Stephen talked about his class at San Francisco State Experimental College, "Experiments in Unified Field Theory." Psychedelics were a topic. Everyone there had taken some. I hadn't but was thinking about it. We talked about starting a commune out in the country. Stephen knew of a big house out at Stinson Beach and by the end of the evening four of the students, including myself, decided with Stephen and Margaret to move out there

into the oldest two-story house in that small beach town.

During our time at Stinson Beach, we decided to go to Haight Street once a week or so and see if there was anyone we could help. In 1966 and 1967, the streets were filled with beautiful innocent wide-eyed teenagers who had run away from home to see what was happening in San Francisco. The city and Haight Street were a rude awakening to many of them. They got there and had to figure out where to live and what to eat... and what not to eat. We'd drive down to the Haight-Ashbury and talk to one or two of them and ask them if they wanted to come home to our commune. We took them back to the Stinson Beach house, fed them, and told them to call home and tell their parents where they were and how they were doing. Some parents hadn't heard from their kids in some time.

In the class, we talked about $E=mc^2$ and the speed of light and how telepathy was faster than that, and that if you are honest and clear with everyone in a group that the telepathy would

happen instantaneously, all at once. That happened in our early meetings and it worked so well. There were times when we all knew something at the same time. It was totally awesome when it happened. Stephen led these conversations, and he was honest and real. Most everybody contributed to the conversation.

The class was about eight to 10 people at that time. We were meeting at the Gallery Lounge on the Quad at San Francisco State College. We felt like we were coming up with some good ideas of how to not only make things better in our lives and around us but also how to apply these energy rules on a greater level and make the world a better place for everybody. It was a big meeting room and we sat on the carpeted floor in the middle and the vision was crystal clear all over the room but especially in our small group.

Stephen was a good speaker and drew more people into the conversation. We were filling the Gallery Lounge and it became clear that we were going to need a larger place to meet. We moved to the Glide Memorial Church where Stephen connect-



Photos © David Frohman



Photos © David Frohman

ed with the minister. Stephen and Margaret's plan was to go on a speaking tour around the country. It wasn't time yet, but they were talking about it.

Also, about this time our commune in Stinson broke up. We all moved back to the city. I moved into a small apartment with several students I'd met in class. The Stinson Beach House group had done its job and we all moved on to the next step!

• • •

Richard Schoenbrun, a National Guard vet, has been involved with the community almost as long as Pamela Hunt. Over time quite a few military veterans have passed through The Farm, seeking peace after the horrific violence they had experienced during war. Stephen Gaskin himself was a Korean War vet who had emerged from that conflict committed to working for a more peaceful world without war!

I was a Weekend Warrior and a grocery clerk in the San Fernando Valley. The Watts Riots on TV (August 1965) were only 30 miles away. On a Friday morning we got the call that we were activated. I had joined the Army Reserves right out of high school. In my last year of active service, I was suddenly part of a deployment of 4,000 Guardsman, marching into the streets of Watts shoulder to shoulder, with fixed bayonets. I was 21 years old.

The next five days changed my life forever. I became a combat veteran on American soil. There were dead bodies on the

streets, burning buildings, empty shells of burnt buildings, and even more significantly, I saw for the first time that people lived in Third World conditions in my own city.

Seeking change, I tried marijuana and laughed so much it became my choice over alcohol. In 1967 I participated in the Great Peace March against the Vietnam War from downtown San Francisco into Haight-Ashbury and eventually decided to move into the district. I heard that Stephen Gaskin, a Korean War Vet and Creative Writing instructor, was holding meetings in a student lounge, tying people's psychedelic experiences to the ancient teachings of the world's religions. I started going to his classes. My most profound spiritual experience on LSD was on Mount Tamalpais communing with a cow, which left me a lifelong vegan. Stephen's following grew and he went on a national book tour with a large Caravan of rolling school bus homes. When it was obvious that the group had become a community, Stephen realized that we had to find land and Tennessee was a good place to look. Our bus, with two couples and two babies on board, was in.

After 23 years on The Farm my family relocated to California, where I discovered Sufi Dances of Universal Peace, now my spiritual practice. I continued as an RN, eventually doing Hospice Care and Geriatric Case Management. This enabled me to retire comfortably enough to travel and volunteer at free medical and dental events, the joy of my life in my mid-70s. I am living my hippie dream of service. I have recently returned to The Farm after reconnecting with my friends and the land, and in my house

at the end of the road, I feel like I am home for good!

• • •

Midwifery and home birth have long been a part of life on The Farm. In our community Birth is regarded as a Sacrament, a holy event. The Farm Midwives, led by Ina May Gaskin, Stephen's wife, helped revolutionize the birthing process in America, starting with birthing our own babies naturally and then offering services to women from around the country and sometimes the world.

Carol Ann Nelson has been involved with this program for more than 40 years, delivering babies in Wisconsin, Florida, and the South Bronx as well as in Tennessee. Carol helped start the South Florida School of Midwifery in Miami, Florida. She helped develop the Certified Professional Midwife (CPM) credential, now accepted in many states around the country. She and another Farm Midwife recently started College of Traditional Midwifery, a competency-based education program that offers an Associate Degree in the Applied Science of Midwifery. Carol lives on The Farm and currently serves the nearby Amish community, driving out to their farms to deliver their babies and healthcare at home.

I was working as a nurse in labor and delivery before I moved to The Farm in 1972. Ina May heard about me, and she called and asked if I wanted to go to a birth. Of course, I did. I hadn't ever been to a home birth and was looking forward to that. It

was the mother's fifth baby. She was beautiful, peaceful, and pushed that baby out with such grace. Her husband was there at her side being so supportive. I was amazed at how beautiful and natural the whole process was. When the placenta came, the mother started to hemorrhage. Before Ina May could ask for Pitocin (a drug used to help control hemorrhage) I had already drawn it up into the syringe and was handing it to her. She and I were very telepathic from that time on. Ina May put me on the midwife crew and started training me right after that birth.

Birth at home made so much more sense to me. So peaceful and loving, the wonderful vibrations and beautiful visual color...it was such a spiritual experience. The awesome experience of seeing the changes a woman makes through the process of birth; seeing the Goddess come alive in every woman; seeing the new little spirits come into the world, so mind blown, so aware and absorbing of everything around them...made me fall in love. I was in love with birth.

• • •

Nonviolence and compassionate communication have always been cornerstone beliefs and practices of The Farm Community. The Caravan itself was a peace mission, reaching out to our parents' generation in turbulent times. From the very beginning there were no firearms allowed on The Farm, and that was part of the reason we were accepted by the people



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of Tennessee; we were not perceived as a threat. Internally, we were dedicated to resolving our disputes through conflict resolution, and we continue to do so. **Mary Ellen Bowen** has taken that dedication to a much greater level in Tennessee and then brought it back to the community 30 years later!

I came to The Farm with my three children, Susan, Lauren, and Steve, in March of 1976. I needed to get my kids out of the Chicago area to somewhere I could believe in, somewhere safe for the kids and in the country! Thanks to The Farm publication *Hey Beatnik*, I found out about The Farm Community that described itself as a “Family Monastery” and I immediately thought “that’s for me and my kids!”

Upon arriving I right away got involved in the school and for several years I taught many grades. After the changeover, I and a few other teachers ran The Farm School for years so it would survive. I taught many subjects at all grade levels, and in music class I started a few kid rock ‘n’ roll bands.

In 1986 I recreated Kids To The Country (KTC) in Tennessee. KTC was conceived in the South Bronx, New York, for urban at-risk kids to get out of the city and come to the countryside for nature study and conflict resolution education. Through grants and donations, we have served over 8,500 kids. Thirty-five years later, I am still running KTC and it remains a project of our nonprofit, Plenty International.

On The Farm, I lived in many households of 20 to 40-plus adults and at least that many children. We had regular house meetings in order to solve problems, plan projects, distribute

the work, and most of all figure out about getting along better. We talked about keeping the “vibes” high because it made for a smoother-running household and was good for the kids. This was our organic form of conflict resolution, and it inspired me to continue in this field.

Since then, I have earned a masters degree, given and been through countless trainings, built two mediation programs in Nashville and locally that serve Tennessee general sessions and juvenile courts, taught conflict resolution classes to over 30,000 kids in seven Middle Tennessee county schools, trained over 1,300 mediators, and am still a Restorative Justice practitioner today. Although we on The Farm developed our conflict resolution process organically, it was wonderful to discover the many techniques that can be learned that really do help people resolve issues more effectively and kindly. Today we have our own Community Conflict Resolution Team on The Farm.

• • •

Helpful outreach was one of the original intentions of the community. We set out to actively apply the “Good Samaritan” principles that seemed to be important tenets of all religions and spiritual practices. From the very beginning we reached out to our near neighbors and helped them out in numerous ways, as they had helped us. Plenty International, our nonprofit 501(c)(3), was created to help protect and share the world’s abundance and knowledge for the benefit of all. Plenty’s



underlying principle was that “if things were distributed more fairly in the world, there would be Plenty for everyone!” Plenty has been called the “Hippie Peace Corps,” and it has carried out projects supporting economic self-sufficiency, cultural integrity, and environmental responsibility in the US, Central America, the Caribbean, East Asia, and Africa. Plenty is especially known for its work locally with children in the US, its work in Guatemala following a devastating earthquake in 1976, the Plenty Ambulance Service in the South Bronx, and for its ongoing work with the Oglala Lakota at Pine Ridge Reservation.

Plenty cannot be overtly political, but its mission and purpose have revolutionary potential, certainly at a cultural and spiritual level, seeking to balance out the inequities inherent in the way human society is organized today by empowering those who most need it and can use the resources. Its motto is “Because in all fairness, there is enough,” meaning if we humans as a species quit hoarding and fighting and instead learn to share, life would be much better for all concerned. **Peter Schweitzer**, Plenty’s Executive Director, has been involved with the community for 50 years. He has lived both on and off The Farm, and currently resides here in his home and office.

By 1974 The Farm had settled into a level of competence and near self-sufficiency, and at a Sunday Morning Service that spring, Stephen Gaskin proposed that we set up a way to reach out to our neighbors, both locally and around the world, and look for ways to be of some help. The community embraced the idea. At the time there were around 500 folks, mostly young adults with an expanding population of children on the Farm. Rooted in the spiritual explorations of Stephen Gaskin’s Mon-

day Night Class in San Francisco (1968-1970) and the Caravan tour of the US (1970-1971), The Farm Community has always sought to be helpfully engaged beyond the confines of The Farm Community itself. We’ve wanted to reach out and not just be focused on *our own* needs.

Being respectful, community-based hippies, looking to learn and help, has opened doors and made us accepted and welcomed by different communities of a wide spectrum of cultures. Since Plenty was founded, its projects promoting cultural and economic health, welfare, and sustainability have happened in 20 different countries. In the four years after meeting the Mayans in Guatemala following the earthquake in 1976, more than 200 Farm adults and children got to live for a time in Guatemala. We also brought over 100 Mayan friends, adults and children, to The Farm for short stays on H-3 visas. Some of our volunteers learned to speak Kaqchikel, and The Farm started wearing Mayan *trajé*.

We really felt like family with these people. They also opened our eyes and minds to the history and plight of indigenous people around the world and how much we had to learn from them and how much we owed them. As a result, working with indigenous people became central to our mission.

Our community was, by contrast, such a baby. Our culture was so young and untested whereas the Mayan culture was ancient and deeply rooted. The Mayan people today are among the economically poorest of the poor but culturally and spiritually very rich. Meeting the Mayans of Guatemala helped The Farm deal with our comparatively minor challenges of poverty and lack of resources—one difference being that we had chosen

to be poor, at least relative to the dominant American society, but we still had access to everything we needed in the way of the basics, food, potable water, health care, shelter, and land.

We saw clearly how well off we were in material things and access to resources, and that inspired us to try to figure out ways to be helpful to people who didn't have these advantages. It made us more generous with each other and kinder. It influenced and permeated every aspect of The Farm like our cottage industries and other nonprofits, all of which are linked by a common history and commitment to the idea and practice of "Right Livelihood."

We believe the hippies were right to rethink the overly materialistic American culture we grew up in and we're gratified to see young people today picking up the banners of nonviolence and taking better care of each other and the planet. As always, the challenges are daunting: global warming, systemic poverty, bigotry and inequality, war. Our message to them is, you will never lack for opportunities to do things for others. Finding and creating solutions in partnership with people of like mind and heart is where the action is, and the fun—and, it turns out, all you need is love. (For more about Plenty visit plenty.org.)

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In 1981, members of the Akwesasne Mohawk community requested Plenty's help setting up a volunteer emergency medi-

cal service for the 6,000 residents of the reservation. Plenty sent a certified EMT instructor and paramedic from The Farm, the late Gary Rhine, assisted by his EMT-certified wife, Nancy, to teach an Emergency Care and Transport course, and administer the formal licensure exams. For almost two months, Gary, Nancy, and their three children became part of the community there and taught a team of dedicated Mohawk volunteers who formed the new ambulance service, "Akwesasne Emergency Team." Nancy Rhine Figallo reflects:

Living with the Mohawks, we learned first-hand about the tribe's strong respect for the entire family—children, mothers, fathers, elders. Our new friends there noticed, I think, our dedication to taking good care of our hippie children, babysitting some of their kids, and having our kids integrate into their kid scene. It was all very natural, but we were aware of being ambassadors for The Farm.

On our last evening at Akwesasne, the community prepared a big feast for us in the Community Center. We sat with the people—the chief, the elders, the clan mothers, the children—and celebrated the success of the new EMT graduates. Chief Tom Porter began to speak eloquently, giving thanks for the gathering, the project's completion, and Akwesasne's relationship with The Farm. Tom read to us a formal greeting from his people, which we were to deliver to our people. I was completely mesmerized, having goose bumps all over from the energy.

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**Chief Tom Porter (Kanatsiohareke)—
A Message from the Mohawk Nation:**

Tell the people that the Chiefs of the Mohawk Nation send regards and greetings to the Chiefs of The Farm,
and that the Clan Mothers of the Mohawk Nation send regards and greetings to the Clan Mothers of The Farm,
and that the Spiritual Faith-keepers of the Mohawk Nation send regards and greetings to the Spiritual Faith-keepers of The Farm,
and all the people who are the Backbone of the Mohawk Nation send regards and greetings to all the people who are the Backbone of The Farm,
and all the Children of the Mohawk Nation send regards and greetings to the Children of The Farm,
even the Youngest, Most Newborn of the Mohawk Nation sends regards and greetings to the Youngest, Most Newborn of The Farm.

What a great blessing we received from these original people and what a blessed opportunity it was to be with them.

• • •

Growing your own food was seen as a key to independence and security by many young people forming intentional communities in the 1960s and '70s, both “back to the land” rural

communities and urban communities. Actually, producing the food turned out to be more challenging than many had thought.

At The Farm, it took a lot of big machinery, diesel fuel, muscle power, and ingenuity to turn an old cattle ranch into viable fields producing beans, grains, vegetables, and fruits to sustain and nourish the growing community. Within five years **Michael O’Gorman** and the farming crew had developed their operation to the point where they were supplying a large portion of The Farm’s food needs. But the community’s population was expanding so rapidly that the farming operation, in trying to step up to the growing needs, became overextended and wound up in debt.

At the changeover from commune to cooperative, the farming crew was dissolved, but left the community with well-tended and non-eroded fields, limed and fertilized for hay production, and an acre of blueberries that still produces copiously to this day. The farming crew was a learning experience for all concerned, painful at times, but in the first few years a bunch of mostly young suburbanites managed to put together a farming operation that was literally feeding its community a large portion of its vegetarian diet, thus demonstrating that it can be done at a community level.

Michael O’Gorman then grew food for Jacobs Farm/Del Cabo organic produce company in Baja California for many years. In 2007 he started the Farmer Veteran Coalition, which has helped thousands of military veterans in numerous ways and continues to help them find occupations in farming while



rejuvenating the farming industry in America.

Being tasked with the job of feeding The Farm Community as a young man with relatively little farming experience was an enormous burden. As many as 1,500 people would most likely not have something to eat if we did not grow it, and that meant impacting my children and the children of my friends. But it was the community that made it happen; the 40 or 50 of us who became the farming crew working as a unit, each focusing where our individual talents were strongest, but sharing our common goals and enjoying the bonds of camaraderie and friendship as we pushed ourselves and each other. We treated each other well and it made all the difference.

After Tennessee, I was able to build three of the country's largest organic vegetable companies, by focusing on building that same sense of community for the employees. The workers had a deep sense of ownership and fidelity to the company because they were valued, empowered, and appreciated.

With the Farmer Veteran Coalition, building community was the key again. Veterans were returning from war to some of our most rural communities. We introduced them to each other, helped them cultivate friendships, and let them feel that once again they shared a sense of mission—this time one of PEACE!

• • •

John Coate has been involved with The Farm Community for 50 years in one way or another. After he left the community in 1983, he got to do some groundbreaking work in online community. He explains how his Farm experiences helped him in his ongoing career.

When I left The Farm for California with my young family in 1983, I knew I would not be moving back to The Farm,

but I also knew I was not done with community. After three years fixing cars in Marin County, I ran into Matthew McClure, my close friend from Farm days. He was working with Stewart Brand at the Whole Earth Catalog/magazine and the newly begun online computer communication network, The WELL, and he offered me a job. I had never even sat in front of a computer, but I took the leap of faith that has defined my career ever since.

I worked there for five years with another of our Farm pals, Cliff Figallo. The WELL itself was, and is, an online destination where any number of people come and converse in words using a structured interface that lets you go in and out of any conversation on your own time. It allows conversing that is light, quick, long, or deep.

My title was Marketing Director, but as I watched the intelligent and well-spoken people interact with each other, I realized that they were striving for more than just an information exchange. This endeavor wasn't the computer business. It was the relationship business. And that is why I was hired. I had lived with about 200 different people on The Farm in about 15 different configurations—buses, tents, houses in the deep woods and the inner city. I learned how to listen to and get along with a very large number of people in my Farm days and so did Cliff. We had developed good habits along the way for getting along with all sorts of people. In early 1986, looking for a way to describe what The WELL was really about, I coined the term “online community.”

The WELL never became that big or more than modestly profitable. But it was called “the world's most influential online community” by *Wired!* magazine in 1997 because we showed that there is no limit to how deep people can go with each other using networked computing and that it can be experienced by a group to the point that they self-identify as a community. The WELL continues today as a generator and sustainer of deep lasting relationships.



This last piece is from the late **Marilyn Friedlander**, a revered teacher at The Farm School from the early days till the changeover. Everyone who knew Marilyn remembers her fondly and a few years ago her husband, David, moved back to The Farm.

How to explain this...the connection that exists among all Farm folks, whether still there, just left, or long-gone, or whether long time or short time residents?

Above and beyond everything else, there is our religion. We were so earnest. We gathered together every Sunday morning to meditate with complete eagerness. There were no doubters (well maybe a few visitors) in our meditation group. So many of us had taken psychedelics and had our cultural conditioning blown away enough to experience a world of higher consciousness, to know with a certainty that could not be shaken, that Spirit exists and that we are all One. This was the incredible binder, a shared psychedelic vision. We were students of this religion together. Our lives were dedicated to our path.

The path we chose was to build a village...from scratch. So those experiences we shared creating our own little town still bind us together. They are absolutely unique, and they absolutely continue to keep that bond together.

We are like the Jews of the Bible, those of us who lived on The Farm and left. We created our own Diaspora. When our paths cross, we recognize each other with the kind of recognition that goes beyond mere sight. We may not have hung out or even liked each other all that much. We may not have too much to say to each other beyond initial "how are you?" But we have a shared past which creates a connection, the tie a friend referred to as a "**Farmie thing.**" We are bound by religion, by language, by institutions, by land, by diet, by this unique experience called The Farm.

The Farm's Legacy

The Farm is alive and well after 50 years, but it is much more than just a place in Tennessee. The Farm itself is still the hub, the homeland, the Motherland of the members and their children, whether here or dispersed in various parts of the country and the world. The Farm has always been a school where all members are students and community is the teacher. The Farm is an at-large community and many of the original members and second-generation folks like to return for visits, and several have come back to stay. Increasingly we stay in touch through social media especially during this year of quarantine. Beyond that, the ripples of The Farm's influence and outreach are still being felt in the media and in the cultural imagination of our country.

Many in our generation, now in or approaching our 70s, were and are inspired to dedicate "the great pure effort" still to the causes of social, racial, and environmental justice. Many if not all of us underwent some kind of transformative experience that changed our lives. We are grateful to see some of the new younger generations around the planet stepping up to continue this work. Hopefully, The Farm Community will always be a positive influence in this regard. We are blessed and we believe in sharing blessings with the global society. 🍁

This project of The Farm Archive Library was collaboratively produced by Michael Traugot, David Frohman, Mary Ellen Bowen, Peter Schweitzer, Pamela Hunt, Richard Schoenbrun, Carol Ann Nelson, Nancy Rhine Figallo, Michael O'Gorman, John Coate, Marilyn Friedlander, Anita Whipple, and Gerald Wheeler—all either current, former, and/or returned members of The Farm Community—to help mark The Farm's 50th anniversary. See www.thefarmcommunity.com.



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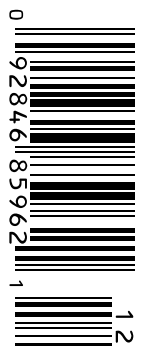


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