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Adventures in
Community

Rainbow

Burning Man

New Culture

Farm Festivals

Neighborhood Chickens

A Virtual Retirement Village

Spring 2009 • Issue #142

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communities.ic.org

SENIOR COHOUSING

A Community Approach to Independent Living - The Handbook



"At last, here is a guidebook to a new way of aging for older Americans ..."

-Kathy Goss, Journalist, review for Amazon.com

SENIOR COHOUSING

A Community Approach to Independent Living - The Handbook

"This book is the most comprehensive and up-to-date book currently available on the topic of senior cohousing ..."

... Durrett has done a superb job in thoroughly covering the psychological and social aspects of cohousing in addition to the logistics, operations, and design elements.

Although an architect by training, Durrett has an intuitive feel for what a reader needs to know about this fast growing new trend. The comprehensive nature of this book, demonstrates Durrett's knowledge of the topic from a holistic perspective way beyond the mere design facets of creating cohousing communities. He innately understands all the concerns, fears, misunderstandings, and objections people may have about cohousing – and logically and thoroughly addresses each one in an easy to follow logical style.

Not only is this book unique in its subject matter, but also the presentation of the content is the most comprehensive and "usable" of any book currently available on this subject. Durrett's book quite simply is the "gold standard" for anyone interested in this subject. Regardless if you are a layperson wanting basic information, a highly motivated individual wanting to create a cohousing community, or a professional working with seniors and/or the aging field, this book is a "must read."

Senior Cohousing is not only a pioneering book in its presentation and coverage of a fast growing social and lifestyle trend, but it is an insightful, comprehensive overview addressing every aspect of cohousing. This book is cohousing from A to Z – all presented in an engaging and easy to follow format. Durrett is clearly the US leader and expert in this field, and his book is guaranteed to have far-reaching impact as people become more aware of this practical, economical, creative, and resourceful way to live."

– Alice Jacobs Ed.D., MS;
Senior education and learning specialist

"... and cohousing – perhaps the most creative housing options for seniors – is one that we can make happen for us NOW ... It is easy to read, highlights all the major issues one needs to anticipate, and gives clear how-to-do-it guidelines to a group wanting to take charge of their own housing future. It tackles problems that any group will undoubtedly face and gives helpful solutions, making the often daunting task of creating a cohousing community seem "do-able." It is a very inspiring testament to growing old "in community."

– Lisa Anthony,
Second Journey
secondjourney.org



Senior cohousing is an entirely new way for seniors to house themselves with dignity, independence, safety, mutual concern, and fun. Developed with the residents themselves, senior cohousing combines the autonomy of private dwellings with the advantages of shared facilities and community living. Senior cohousing residents live among people with whom they share a common bond of age, experience, and community – a community they themselves built to specifically meet their own needs.



Twenty years of working with, and living in, cohousing helped create this 249-page book by Charles Durrett, licensed and award-winning architect. After the first introduction of the cohousing concept

to the U.S. by husband-and-wife team Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett in 1988, almost 100 such communities have been built and more than 150 groups are currently in the process of creating a cohousing community.

Illustrated with photos and graphics, this book addresses in great depth the advantages and the why and how of senior cohousing. This book is also for younger people working with their parents to come up with alternatives to traditional retirement homes, in the same way they now plan their finances, to also consider the need to address their social and emotional well-being. The book is divided into four parts: Introducing Senior Cohousing, Senior Cohousing in Denmark, Creating Senior Cohousing, and Pioneering Senior Cohousing in America. The book offers detailed steps, so anyone can create a senior cohousing community.

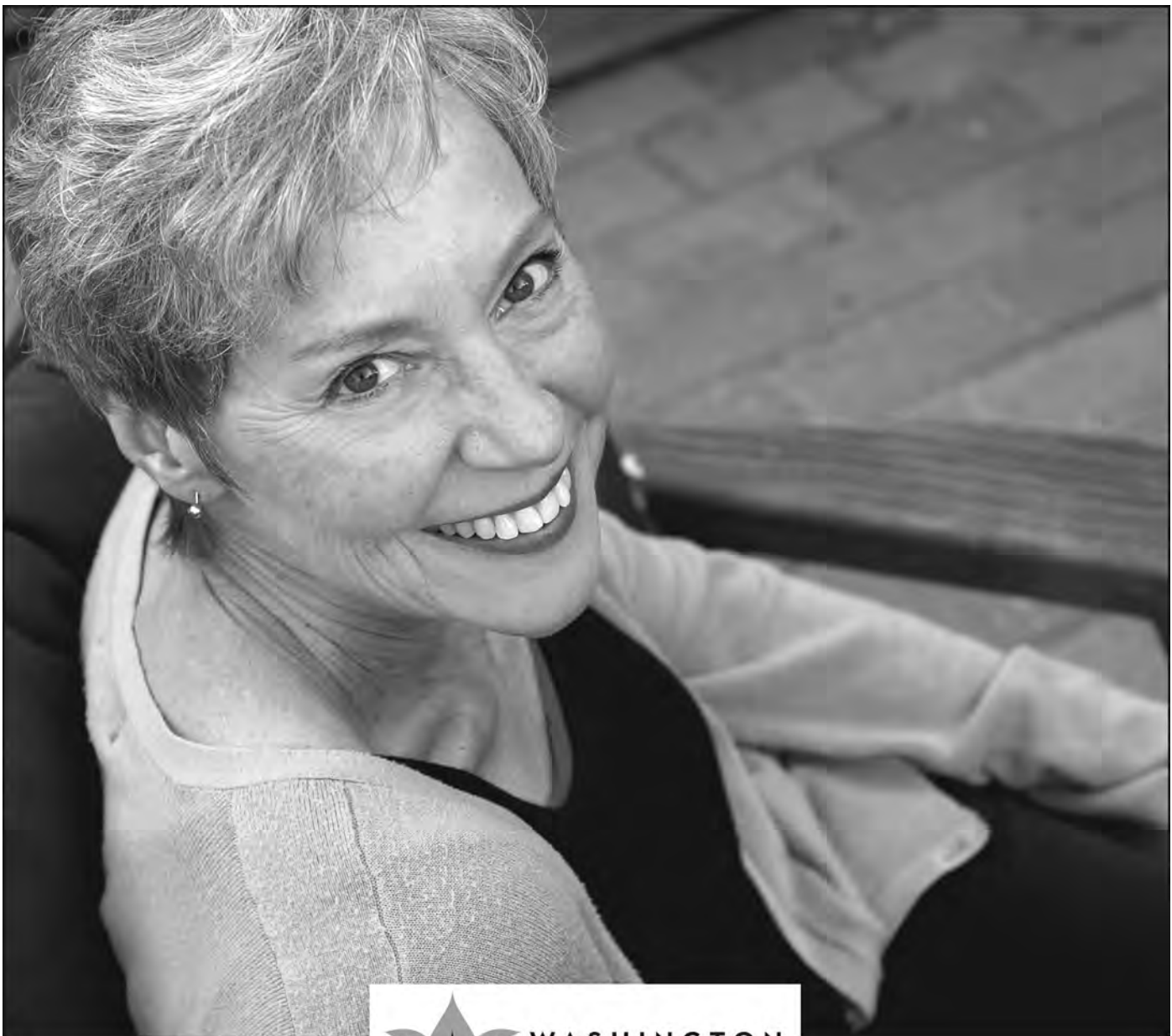
To order the book 'Senior Cohousing', send check payable to:

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Architects
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ph. 510.549.9980

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COMMUNITIES

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Courtesy of The Farm

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Festivals and Gatherings

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Celebration Activists lead French villagers in an Easter procession, part of a ceremony honoring connection with spirit and nature and the passing of winter into spring. Up front in white, carrying the instrument, is François Monet, the inspiration for these village festivals. (Eourres, Provence, France, 2007.)



COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

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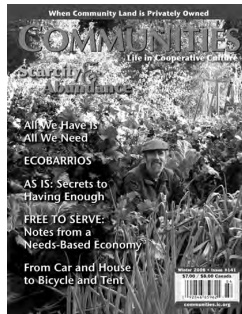
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LETTERS



on the Scarcity & Abundance theme. The Table of Contents has evolved into a nicely inviting format, causing me to forget what chore I was approaching and instead sit down for an immediate read. [Lost Valley land steward] Rick [Valley] looks blissed in the abundant garden, perfect for the cover.

Winter Bliss

Congratulations on a fabulous winter issue! My fav in a good while. Great diversity of articles while keeping focused

Chant Thomas

Trillium Farm Community Land Trust
Jacksonville, Oregon

Fresh Air

THANKS for COMMUNITIES magazine! You're a much needed breath of fresh air. With your stories of cooperation around the US and the world, you're a great antidote to the tales of greed and conflict given such prominence in mainstream media. Keep up the great work!

David Schrom

Palo Alto, California

A Hand for the Practical

I have thoroughly enjoyed the past two issues (just got the last one today). I had been critical in the past over what I considered an amazing fixation on "process." The practical articles on peak oil survival, "right livelihood," conservation, frugality, etc. keep me subscribing. Let me suggest Americans will need to appreciate fine handtools again, if they need to grow even a portion of their own food. The Prohoe company makes a line of fine agricultural hoes (google "rogue hoe"). The weeding hoes are less tiring to use; and the digging hoes cut into even baked Carolina red

clay. Best of all, this is an American family-owned company. They are honorable people, and a pleasure to deal with.

George Burnett

Spartanburg, South Carolina

Green Burials

Have you considered featuring an article about Green Burials in the magazine? www.greenburial.org is a growing movement.

I wonder how many communities have green burial sites and how many are considering it. I live at Milagro Cohousing in Tucson (www.milagrocohousing.org). A member just died and requested a green burial. We have room (land) but do not have a registered cemetery site. She was buried unembalmed, in a shroud at a newly registered burial site located in a very small community in Tucson.

Seems like this fits into community, having one's body return to the land.

Patricia DeWitt

Tucson, Arizona

Editor's note: If you are a member of a community which has explored or developed green burial options, we welcome your response to this query (email editor@ic.org).

Urban Ecovillage Proposal

I recently sent the email below to president-elect Barack Obama. I am hoping that this "letter" will inspire discussion of the issue.

To President-Elect Barack Obama:

I am a semiretired remodeling contractor with an interest in passing on a survivable world to my son. Our 50-year consumerism binge has driven us to bankruptcy, contaminated our environment, induced widespread third world poverty, and accelerated climate change to the point where the long-term survival of any given species is problematic. For us to survive, consumerism will be replaced by sustainability, either in



LETTERS

the near future by design or in coming generations by desperate acts of those trying to survive.

One area that has been quietly emerging for several decades with the potential to change the very fabric of our culture is that of sustainable residential communities, i.e. "ecovillages." As most people live in an urban environment, I would like to propose a pilot program to create ecovillages (green neighborhoods) in a few carefully selected metropolitan areas. The structure of the program would be determined by those involved, since each local community is somewhat unique. A hypothetical pilot program might develop as follows:

First, a site in a host city is selected and guidelines established. Potential host cities with a demonstrated interest in environmental issues, or whose needs are great, include Portland, Seattle, San Francisco, Cleveland, Detroit, Atlanta, and New Orleans. Within any city boundary, potential sites for the establishment of such a community may include abandoned residential subdivisions, misused industrial sites in need of remediation, older shopping malls of decreasing viability, idle or under-used government property, or even existing neighborhoods with an expressed interest.

Next, work is started with a mentoring staff to supervise actual construction, with the labor in large part coming from would-be owner/residents. Experience gained from each project would be used in subsequent programs.

The benefits of these sustainable villages/neighborhoods would be:

- Employment, from on-site production of food, fiber, energy, and jobs using local raw materials.
- Affordable housing, achieved via sweat equity and reduced initial land cost.
- A healthier living environment.
- Reduced need for traditional

municipal services.

- Less vulnerability to disruptions from severe weather events, major economic downturns or even terrorism.

An ecovillage in a major urban environment would be of a great interest to the larger urban community, the nation, and the rest of the world, accelerate the conversion of society to sustainability, and provide a living laboratory that would lure "green industry."

Bill Barkley

Vancouver, Washington

Ecovillages Online

I'd like to invite COMMUNITIES readers to subscribe to my online newsletter, *Ecovillages*.

It's free. www.EcovillageNews.org.

I'm publishing *Ecovillages* to inspire people with relevant short articles about ecovillages worldwide. And I want to encourage people who want to join an ecovillage or start their own.

I'm happy to see that ecovillages are frequently covered in COMMUNITIES. Tamera in Portugal was featured in your Fall 2008 issue on politics. Your natural building issue last summer had articles about Emerald Earth in California, Damanhur in Italy, Kibbitz Lotan in Israel, and EcoReality Co-op and O.U.R. Ecovillage in British Columbia. Your issue on women in community in Spring 2008 featured Earthaven and Dancing Rabbit.

Thank you!

Diana Leafe Christian

Earthaven Ecovillage
Black Mountain, North Carolina

Diana Leafe Christian is a former editor of COMMUNITIES magazine, author of Creating a Life Together and Finding Community, and publisher of Ecovillages newsletter: www.EcovillageNews.org.

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

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COMMUNITIES Editorial Policy

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

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

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

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

Submissions Policy

To submit an article, please first request Writers' Guidelines: COMMUNITIES, 81868 Lost Valley Ln, Dexter OR 97431; 541-937-2567 x116; editor@ic.org. To obtain Photo Guidelines, email: layout@ic.org. Both are also available online at communities.ic.org.

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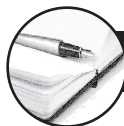
We accept paid advertising in COMMUNITIES because our mission is to provide our readers with helpful and inspiring information—and because advertising revenues help pay the bills.

We handpick our advertisers, selecting only those whose products and services we believe will be helpful to people interested in community living, cooperation, and sustainability. We hope you find this service useful, and we encourage your feedback. As in the COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY, we edit our REACH listings only for clarity and length, and can't guarantee that all community information contained in them is accurate—we encourage you to verify it as you pursue your interest in any group.

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What is an “Intentional Community”?

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



PUBLISHER'S NOTE BY LAIRD SCHAUB

Technology Doesn't Change Just the Answers

Sometimes It Changes the Questions as Well



I have a three-lettered acronym that comes in handy as a process consultant: OBE. (No, it doesn't mean Order of the British Empire, though that's a useful bit of crossword trivia.) In my argot, it means “overtaken by events.” I use it to describe challenges that become moot with shifting circumstances.

For example, learning how to type accurately was an important secretarial skill when people relied on the technology of mimeograph machines to create inexpensive copies (it was an absolute booger correcting mistakes on a stencil, necessitating costly delays). Today, in the era of high-speed photocopiers, no one uses stencils. With computer word processing and inexpensive printers, it's no big deal to rework a document and crank out a fresh original if someone discovers a typo. Although it's more important today that everyone learns to type—it's hard to imagine functioning without email or access to the Web—the need to type accurately is largely OBE.

In general, people live in intentional communities with the purpose of altering their lifestyles to something more in line with their values than they can readily find among mainstream options. It's what makes them “intentional.” While communities vary substantially in where they draw their lines, for the purpose of this article I want to focus on the history of television at Twin Oaks, which is a well-established income-sharing community in central Virginia that will cel-

brate its 42nd anniversary in June. Twin Oakers have a history of being deliberate about how much they let outside culture seep into their environment, and yet the floodgates are never closed completely. They are not trying to be isolationist; they are striving simply to moderate their exposure to mainstream cultural influences—an effort I applaud.

Last August I was at the community to participate in their annual Communities Conference, affording me an occasion to visit with long-time friends around the edges of conference activities. In one such conversation I got a thoughtful reply about the community's evolving relationship with outside media.

Like a number of communities trying to create alternative culture, there has traditionally been a lively debate at Twin Oaks about the evils of television. In its early years, the community simply didn't allow one on the property—it was viewed as too large a conduit for promotion of the kind of values the community was trying to be an alternative to, such as manufactured demand, violence, rapid dialog, materialism, and social isolation (ever try to have a meaningful conversation in the same room with an active television?). While most people will admit that television occasionally offers programs of value, on the whole this was felt to happen not nearly enough to justify all the other crap that would come over the transom. It was an interesting line to draw. While magazine subscriptions went uncensored and there was no attempt to limit radio reception, TV was banned as too insidious.

[As a long-time member of Sandhill

Farm, another egalitarian community, I am highly sympathetic to this debate. We're a 34-year-old group and have never owned a television. Just ask my kids how weird that was. Now both adults, they were careful when growing up about how much they shared of their Sandhill upbringing with their peers. How would they explain no TV? And while I have an excellent relationship with both of my kids today, and visit them frequently, both also own large, flat-screen TVs and subscribe to cable.]

Sometime in the '80s—when Twin Oaks had about two decades under its belt—the community was anonymously gifted a large-screen television, and the community accepted. (There was an intriguing rumor that the donor was none other than B.F. Skinner, the Harvard psychologist whose Utopian novel *Walden Two* inspired the creation of Twin Oaks. It was purported that Skinner offered the television as an educational enhancement, and I never learned if this story were true or apocryphal.) While some Cassandras decried it as a Trojan Horse, the community (after considerable debate) decided it could benefit from the television recreationally. It cleverly disabled the tuner, rendering the unit useful only for showing videocassettes. These had become popular by that time and it helped keep members home, as they weren't inclined to frequent area cinemas as much when movies were coming to them.

The movies shown on campus had to be vetted for acceptable values, and viewings took place only on certain evenings. For the most part, this middle-ground position has worked well and the practice continues today. Technology, however, as it is wont to do, kept evolving and the equation got considerably more complex with the advent of personal computers, miniature televisions, and cell phones.

While the community kept pace with the Information Age by providing an increasing number of desktop computers available for member use in public space, it was perhaps inevitable that machines would start moving into people's private rooms. When the community committed to providing wireless hubs and DSL service, anyone with a computer in their bedroom had unfettered access to the cornucopia of information and visual stimulation of the world wide web. (Sandhill has DSL and wireless service as well, and I am not criticizing that choice; I am only trying to point out how the questions change with the technology.)

Laptops kept getting cheaper, and new, younger members started arriving already owning them and having grown up with the baseline expectation of internet access. Several years ago the community made a conscious effort to recruit and retain younger members, and the decision to support high-speed internet in particular (and modern electronic technology in general) has aided that campaign. Today,

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publicly shown movies are still screened for appropriateness, yet there is no control whatsoever about what members are watching in their own rooms. While the community is pleased with its success in attracting a younger population, my friend at the Communities Conference related her uneasiness with this shift to wide open video access—be it DVDs, something from Netflix, or whatever catches your fancy on the web—having taken place as a result of cultural drift, rather than as the outcome of conscious choice.

A particularly poignant event occurred at Twin Oaks in the late '90s that highlights the emotional flaring

that's possible when values and technology collide. I want to tell the story of my pseudonymous friends Dale and Fulano.

[While "Fulano" is not in my normal pantheon of androgynous pseudonyms, I've selected it here because it was a distinctive favorite of my recently deceased friend and Twin Oaks founder, Kat Kinkade. Kat, this bud's for you!]

Though neither lives in the community today, they were both well-established members at the time of this incident. Dale was mild-mannered, yet highly principled. Fulano was creative and fun-loving.

It happened one day that Fulano was discovered to have smuggled a small television into his bedroom. While clearly against the community norms, he figured no one would notice and what harm was he causing anyway? He was just quietly watching movies in his own room. Dale was pissed by this flaunting of community norms and Fulano's apparent insensitivity to the community's carefully worked position regarding how much mainstream culture was allowed to permeate the community's cultural membrane.

While Fulano was promptly asked to remove the television (and did so), Dale still seethed and was contemplating what he felt might be appropriate consequences for this flagrant violation of agreements. At this critical juncture (are there ever

any accidents?), it came out that Dale, a devoted Trekkie, had occasionally been secretly entering the community's public television space after hours and privately watching videos of Star Trek, the Next Generation. Oops. You might say Dale was hoisted by his own Picard.

In the ensuing decade, personal computers have gradually become a normal feature in members' rooms at Twin Oaks. It's a done deal. While private televisions are still outlawed, who cares? It was this

Twin Oaks is living in the same world as the rest of us and we all have to face the challenge of deciding which aspects of modern technology to embrace and which to set aside.

back-door development that my friend was unhappy about. However, I am not writing this article to say that technology is bad or that

Twin Oaks has sold out. I don't think either thing.

Twin Oaks is living in the same world as the rest of us and we all have to face the challenge of deciding which aspects of modern technology to embrace and which to set aside—typically before we can see clearly the full ramifications of our choice. I am writing this article to point out that as technology changes, so do the questions. I'm imagining, for instance, that Twin Oaks today is more concerned with whether its acceptance of modern electronic technology enhances the quality and frequency of social connections among members. Twenty years ago with television, the answer was "no." In the current world of iPhones and YouTube, the answer is not so clear.

Today, Twin Oakers, like a lot of us, still wrestle with questions about what constitutes healthy culture and how to manifest it. That said, concerns over how much someone is watching Jean Luc outwit aliens is OBE. Just do it in your own room. ❀

Laird Schaub is executive secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), publisher of this magazine, and cofounder of Sandhill Farm community in Missouri, where he lives. He authors a blog which can be read at communityandconsensus.blogspot.com.



Getting Involved with the FIC

I've been working with the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC) for over 20 years now, ever since its renaissance in the mid 1980s. Without intending to brag or whine, I can say truthfully that during many of those years, this work has consumed more than 10 percent of my income, and taken more than 10 percent of my time and energy. Within the FIC, I'm neither unusual nor extreme in my contribution level. When people ask me why I would do this, I tell them that I get to go to very interesting places, collaborate with very capable, highly motivated, deeply experienced people, and help improve the world and the lives of the people in it. What's not to like?

The fire to continue as a community activist is fueled by seeing the light come on in people's eyes as they realize that life can be better. Showing them one way a meeting can be facilitated better opens their eyes to the fact that meetings don't need to be boring wastes of everyone's time. Telling them one story about a successfully resolved conflict lets them see that conflict need not always be destructive. Structuring a conference from a community perspective provides the participants both a taste of community and tools to help them build it in their daily lives. And our community flames are fanned by finding others whose passion for community and cooperation burns as brightly as our own.

If you are inspired to contribute your time and energy to the work of the FIC, there are many ways to get involved. Some work that supports our mission does not involve the FIC directly at all: getting trained in meeting facilitation and sharing it with groups you're involved with; intentionally creating a sense of community, cooperation, and trust in a school or work place; finding ways to bridge between opposing camps in your local political, educational, or social spheres. Yet the FIC itself needs the help of people like you. Though we get a lot of results from the limited human energy and other resources we have, the visible need is much greater than we can address. With more people and resources, we can narrow that gap. You can help.

We will be holding a one-day community event at Kimber-ton Hills near Philadelphia in May of this year. The events team needs people in the Mid-Atlantic area to help publicize the event. We are also planning a larger, three-day conference in the San Francisco Bay area for May 2010. For this we also need local help with publicity, as well as a longer-term, committed person to work on sponsorships and fundraising. This could potentially be an on-going paid position, with the pay being commission-based. Candidates for this position should be comfortable with fundraising, and with working collaboratively

as part of the events team. There are other potential positions on the event team that could involve profit sharing. For more information, contact Ma'ikwe Schaub Ludwig at maikwe@sol-space.net.

The FIC website, www.ic.org, is the premier website on intentional communities. With over half a million unique visitors last year alone, it is a powerful and effective way to spread the word about community worldwide. Webmaster Tony Sirna reports that there are several major improvements that await more time and energy from experienced programmers, designers, and linux system administrators. This work will be quite technical, and will require experience, creativity, and commitment. For more information, contact Tony at website@ic.org.

COMMUNITIES magazine can benefit from many different kinds

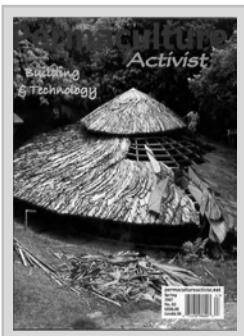
The fire to continue as a community activist is fueled by seeing the light come on in people's eyes as they realize that life can be better.

of support, from simply subscribing (in case you haven't already), giving gift subscriptions, and encouraging your local libraries to subscribe, to helping place the magazine on newsstands in alternative bookstores, natural food stores, co-ops, coffee shops, etc. Beyond that, COMMUNITIES relies on volunteer writers, photographers, and illustrators for its content. If you want to contribute writing, photography, or illustrations, check communities.ic.org/submit.php for upcoming themes and guidelines, or contact Chris Roth: editor@ic.org; 541-937-2567 ext. 116. Support also comes in the form of buying advertising; to place an ad (or to learn more about how to support newsstand sales), contact John Stroup: ads@ic.org; 573-468-8822. Finally, we would greatly appreciate assistance preparing back issue articles for posting to the revamped COMMUNITIES website. Please contact editor@ic.org for more details.

If any of these possibilities strikes a spark of interest, get in touch with the FIC and commit your time and energy to promoting community and cooperation. The world (and the FIC) awaits you! ❁



Harvey Baker lives in Dunmire Hollow Community, where he and a partner have a woodworking business. He also is an organic gardener, bicyclist, harmonica player, and soccer coach.



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In Community, Intentionally

Part 2

"In Community, Intentionally" continues from our Fall issue.

What Works

After living in six communities over 15 years, I thought I knew what worked best—wrong! Since then I've visited over 300 communities to talk with members and ex-members about their experiences, and to observe what seemed to work and not work. My revised opinion about which structures and decision-making processes work best: whatever the members wholeheartedly believe in.

I've seen reasonably well-functioning examples of communities using consensus, majority voting, inspired anarchy, and benevolent dictatorships. I've also seen examples of each of those styles that seemed dysfunctional and disempowering. Sometimes the same community covered both ends of the spectrum, depending on the issue at hand and what side of the bed community members got up on that day. No amount of theory, dogma, and peer pressure can eliminate the need for clarity of vision, open mindedness, personal integrity, good communication, compassion, the spirit of cooperation, and common sense.

The structure a group uses is merely a tool; how it's applied is what's important. Strong leadership can prove to be inspirational and empowering, or it can prove to be dogmatic and repressive—and the same is true of decentralized individualism. What counts most is a collective sense of well-being, empowerment, and community.

The more egalitarian the group's vision, the more likely that there will be subtle internal power dynamics that go

unnoticed, unacknowledged, or outright denied. This observation is not intended to imply that hierarchies have no inherent problems, including those that produce power struggles, rather that the way they describe their own decision-making process is normally closer to the truth than those groups who aspire to equality. (See Joreen Freeman's article "The Tyranny of Structurelessness" in COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY 1995 for a more detailed exploration of this tendency.)

While a sense of unity is typically one of the fundamental goals of intentional communities, it is a quality often lacking—sometimes existing only in theory, or deferred as a long-range goal that will be achieved only when the community becomes more "evolved." Unfortunately, we are quite capable of imagining a glorious utopian future without having yet developed many of the skills required to live up to our own high expectations.

Novelty and Neighbors

One of the problems with pushing the envelope of mainstream society is running up against laws and regulations that make innovation either illegal, or full of bureaucratic hoops to jump through. Innovative construction styles such as strawbale, cob, and earthships, as well as greywater systems, composting toilets, and organic farming technologies, have until recently been so far outside the norm that local inspectors rarely have a clue about such techniques. As a result, government officials regularly erect hurdles and walls in the path of such alternatives. Fortunately,

the innovators have persisted, and local and national codes are slowly embracing alternative technologies.

Zoning regulations, in particular, have proved challenging at times. Numerous cities have laws that prohibit more than three—or in some cases, up to five—unrelated adults from living together in one household. Although such laws were ostensibly instituted to protect neighborhoods from an excess of noise and cars, frequently they are enforced to protect against neighbors displaying nontraditional values and lifestyles. Some of these laws have been overturned in court, but many still exist, and don't usually draw much attention because enforcement is often very lax or nonexistent.

Another set of legal obstacles surfaces around the ownership and financing of commonly held property. Many communities seek to place ownership of their property into a land trust for reasons of affordability, equality, and land stewardship. Land trust philosophy has come a long way over recent decades, but much work has yet to be done before it will be an easily available option in a culture geared toward the sanctity of the individual.

This is also true with funding. It is rare to find a banker that understands and appreciates cooperation and shared ownership, and that makes financing community-held property difficult. For example, a lack of interim construction financing delayed the start of the cohousing movement by several years. It is much easier to secure such funding now that there are many existing prototypes to point to.

Further, because social innovations are often more threatening than technological and economic innovations, relations with neighbors are often hugely challenging. The way neighbors perceive the community—and more importantly, how they interact with it—can run the gamut from generic mistrust and violent hostility to hearty appreciation and mutual cooperation.

When there is a media “cult” scare in the news, some communities—most notably the secretive or isolated groups—experi-

ence unfavorable rumors and critical scrutiny from their neighbors. On the other hand, those deeply involved in local activities (thereby having regular face-to-face encounters with folks living nearby) typically experience very little change in their neighborly interactions and the degree of local acceptance.

This variance reflects the tendency in our culture to mistrust strangers and anyone “different from us.” Thus when a community settles into a new area, the usual default mode is that the locals will eye the newcomers with suspicion until

The insights of an outsider—someone experienced with the issues at hand, but not caught up in the internal dynamics of the community—can often provide the exact piece of information or insight needed to break through an impasse.

the newcomers have “proven themselves.”

This guilty-until-proven-innocent mentality has been fed by the media since the inception of the tabloid, and probably longer. The prevailing attitude among mainstream publishers is simple: sensational news is what sells newspapers and magazines. Yet, for some reason it seems that most readers fail to take that—and the cultural biases automatically built into so-called objective reporting—into account when assessing what coverage to believe.

As a result, it is the communities that are on familiar and friendly terms with their neighbors that fare the best during times of widespread paranoia. When facts are scarce, the tendency is to fill the gaps with imagination. Unfortunately, these projections do not often give newcomers the benefit of the doubt.

Reinventing Wheels

Most of these “unique new ideas” are neither new, nor unique. They seem so to us only because they're not commonly discussed or covered in standard history texts or daily news. People throughout

the world have been trying out similar—if not identical—ideas over many centuries, often bucking resistance and persecution.

Many community groups are unaware of this history and end up starting the community-building process from scratch. There is also a tendency to resist advice from outside experts, usually because of a mistrust of outsiders, or a diehard sense that “We need to be able to do this for ourselves if our model is to be self-sufficient and sustainable.” The reality is that the insights of an outsider—someone experienced with the issues at hand, but not caught up in the internal dynamics of the community—can often provide the exact piece of information or insight needed to break through an impasse and move the community toward a constructive resolution.

One way around this tendency toward isolation is to develop sister communities and networks built around common ideals and interests—the *raison d'être* for the Fellowship for Intentional Community and COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY. Communities in close association with one another can share ideas, resources, and mutual support, thereby benefiting from each other's assets and experience. In addition, community networks can create common funds to do outreach, develop community-based business ventures, and cover medical emergencies (in lieu of expensive insurance policies that drain working capital out of the movement).

It Ain't Easy

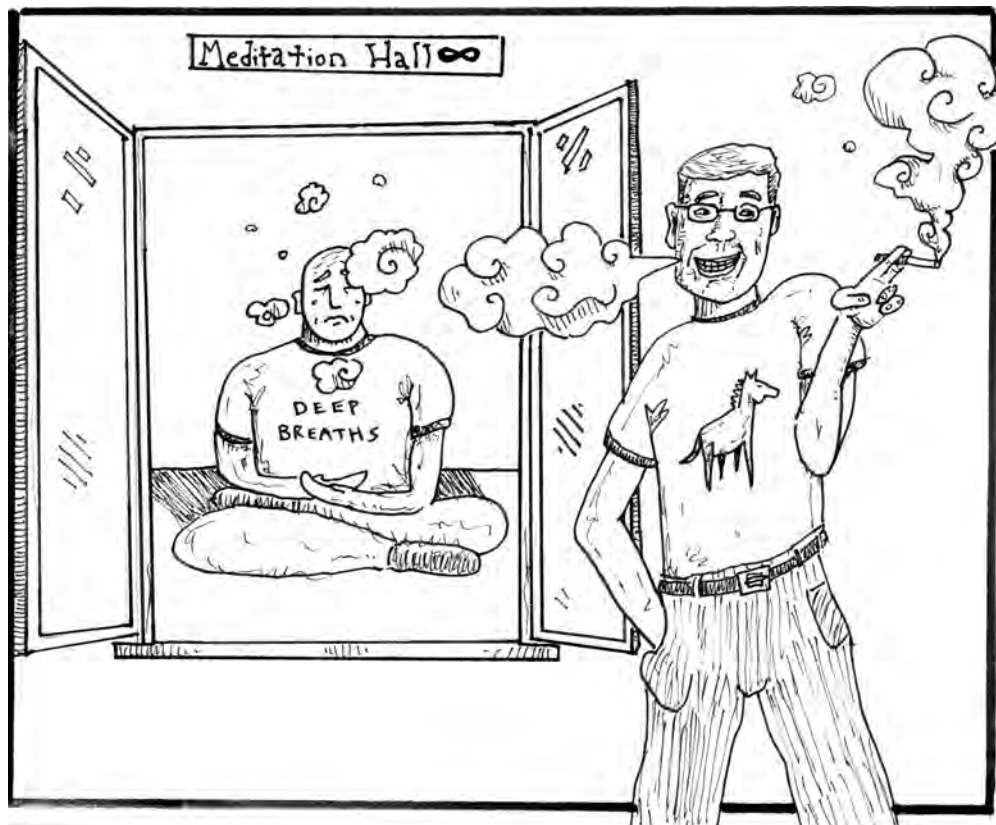
Over the centuries well-intentioned attempts to live in community have generated a huge list of casualties. Countless thousands of folks have been inspired by a vision of a better world, and eventually ended up completely frustrated by the discrepancy between the vision and the reality.

At first glance this might seem peculiar, but it's exactly what should be expected, as most of us are products of an imperfect, overly competitive, alienating society. Although we tend to be aware of

(continued on p. 70)



Cigarettes, Alcohol, Visitors, and Events



Ethan Hughes

Q ■ Our intentional community hosts many outside events and ongoing programs with residential students. Some of the policies regarding substance use that we instituted for ourselves as members don't seem to “cross over” very well when applied to visitors and event attendees.

For example, we originally had a “no alcohol” policy on the property, since we wanted to create as clear a space as possible for exploration of feelings and for personal and spiritual growth, but we changed that policy to allow alcohol consumption in private residences, as long as it was done in moderation and without obvious adverse effects on work performance, community life, etc. The reality was that some members who'd joined after the community's founding enjoyed very moderate amounts of alcohol, and it seemed reasonable to make our policies match our practices rather than forcing those members to lie. Since then, alcohol has become more common in private residences, as witnessed by the piles of bottles and cans in our recycling area.

One difficulty has come in deciding what to tell program and

event attendees about alcohol. Some of our literature tells them that alcohol is not allowed, but when they arrive here, they inevitably discover that it is in fact present. Some then start to use it in their own and others' “private spaces”—which, because of the nature of our guest accommodations, often turn out to be rather public spaces. Others, who had been looking forward to an alcohol-free environment, are confused and disappointed. Alcohol consumption was manageable and caused no problems when it was confined to just some of the residents, who did it in private, but when our many additional visitors start to get involved, it can escalate into a part of the shared culture, which is not what we ever intended it to be.

Similarly, in years past, we often had one or two smokers, usually new or exploring members, who smoked in the single “smoking allowed” area. This had some impact on others in the community, especially those very allergic, but it was a compromise that allowed smokers to be here instead of excluding them out of hand. Usually our shared goal was for the person to kick the habit. We also kept that smoking area open for conference guests—we figured we

couldn't afford to lose business by making our site completely non-smoking. The problem has come with more and more people arriving at our community, both for short- and long-term stays, who are not necessarily aiming to quit and who quickly seem to use smoking as a way of socializing and hanging out. Suddenly, we have way more smokers and way more smoke fumes in the environment than any of us—even the resident smokers—had anticipated or wanted.

In both cases, guidelines that were tenable when applied to a smaller group of longer-term residents, all of whom shared a common desire to not make substances a big part of their lives, seem to

be untenable when applied to a larger group of visitors and shorter-term residents. Community members themselves seem to have contributed to the drift. Do we need to become more rigid? Or do those who are most negatively impacted by alcohol consumption and smoking simply need to accept the situation, or leave? How can we as a community establish healthy boundaries in relation to event and program attendees? Is it fair to have two sets of standards, one for community members and one everyone else? And how can we discuss this in a way that brings the community together rather than tearing it apart?



Beatrice Briggs responds:

It sounds as if your business model is affecting the quality of life of the community members. To minimize the danger of “tearing the group apart” over this issue, I suggest convening a process divided into three parts: analysis, reflection, and decision. Make sure that all members understand

which phase of the process they are in, and limit discussion to topics relevant to that phase. Properly facilitated, this should cut down on the amount of self-serving drama, foster a learning environment, and lead to a decision that everyone can support.

1. First, analyze the business aspect.
 - a. Assemble as many verifiable facts as possible. The kind of data needed could include: How much income came from visitors and shorter-term residents in the past two years (or whatever period makes sense in your context)? What percentage of total income does this amount represent? How many community members earn all or part of their income from the visitor programs? How many visitors and shorter-term residents came to the community in this period? What percentage of them smoked or drank during their stay? How many complaints were received? How many days or weeks per year is the community open to visitors and shorter-term residents? After digesting the facts, reflect on how these numbers affect the members and their quality of life.
 - b. Conduct a survey of past visitors and shorter-term residents, asking questions such as: How important is a smoke- and/or alcohol-free atmosphere is to you? To what degree were you bothered by the presence of smoke/alcohol at the community? Would you come to the community if you knew there was a strictly enforced no smoking/alcohol policy?
 - c. Research the market. Find out what alcohol/smoking policies other retreat and conference centers have.
2. Then revisit the community's vision and mission. Are they still relevant in the current context? If so, what do they tell you about the alcohol/smoking policies as they relate to members and visitors? If not, how should they be changed?
3. Finally, jointly construct a proposal for a new alcohol/smoking policy—or affirm the existing one. Weigh the options and make a decision.

This process could take some time to complete. Meanwhile, I suggest modifying your literature to convey a more accurate picture of the current community policies regarding alcohol and cigarettes—even if this involves admitting to a certain amount of ambivalence around these issues.

Beatrice Briggs is the founding director of the International Institute for Facilitation and Change (IIFAC), a Mexico-based consulting group that specializes in participatory processes. The author of the manual Introduction to Consensus and many articles about group dynamics, Beatrice travels around the world, giving workshops and providing facilitation services in both English and Spanish. Home is Ecovillage Huehucocoyotl, near Tepoztlán, Mexico, where she has lived since 1998. bbriggs@iifac.org; www.iifac.org.



Tree Bressen responds:

I'm starting from the assumptions that any of the outcomes mentioned here are potentially fine, and that it's not up to me to tell your community what its substance use policy should be. Therefore I'm going to focus here on how to have a good conversation about these charged topics.

The most common problem with lifestyle discussions of this nature is if a group falls into blame and defensiveness. One good way to avoid that is to keep the discussion personal at first, before getting into solutions. Have people share stories from their own life experience—no one can argue with another person's life. Or start the discussion in small to mid-sized groups, either before a full-group discussion or early on in a meeting on the topic. These tactics invite compassion over judgment.

What you want is to fill out the complexity of perspectives, and then create a dynamic of the whole group against the problem instead of people in the group feeling at odds with each other. Another method for doing this might be to explore each viewpoint in turn. For example, ask everyone to step into the role of smoker/drinker and talk about how the world looks from that perspective; then invite everyone to step into the role of someone concerned about substance use and say what that's like for them. Next invite everyone into the role of resident member, and then ask everyone to remember back to when they were a visi-

tor or guest. Have everyone brainstorm reasons for a firmer guideline, and then have everyone list what's good about keeping things more loose. And so on. That way each role is de-personalized.

Once a diversity of feelings and viewpoints have been explored, look for areas of agreement...such as your statement that even the smokers are currently wishing for less smoke in the living areas. Then problem-solve together on how those joint desires could be fulfilled. As an example from another arena, abortion foes and pro-choice activists have sometimes found common ground in working on programs to prevent unwanted pregnancies. If you can hold a constructive discussion on the whole subject, my experience is that people will naturally generate good solutions and gravitate to them together.

Tree Bressen is a group process consultant based in Eugene, Oregon, who works with intentional communities and other organizations on how to have meetings that are lively, productive, and connecting. Her website, www.treegroup.info, offers extensive free resources on consensus, facilitation, and more. (Tree uses a lowercase "i" in her writing as an expression of egalitarian values.)



Caroline Estes responds:

It is an interesting phenomenon that oftentimes the values a group of people start a community with get diluted as the community ages. Such is the case with us. However, when we began most people smoked, and within a year everyone stopped. We thought the reason was that we were

in control of our own lives to a large extent and did not need the release that smoking seemed to give. However, I have seen a resurgence of the need to smoke within the last few years. We too have an outside smoking area (no smoking inside any of our houses).

Our situation is a bit different in that we don't have events, but we do have many visitors. Our visitors are informed of our smoking policy and are welcome in the smoking area.

However, the alcohol problem is different. We take up this issue at least once every year or so, and have actually denied internship to some because of the excessive use of alcohol. It would seem that you need to decide as a group what you want to do. It would seem wise to segregate the two groups when making this decision—members or visitors/event participants. Members have an ongoing commitment to each other. If someone got to drinking to excess it could be taken up within the membership. However, with visitors to your community it seems within your responsibility to have a "no alcohol" policy for them.

We are wrestling with the same problem since our residents interact with our visitors and the use of alcohol is apparent. We are in the midst of another round of discussions on the alcohol problem.

Caroline Estes, cofounder of Alpha Farm community in Oregon and Alpha Institute, which teaches consensus and offers facilitation services, has been teaching and facilitating consensus for more than 40 years. Caroline has taught consensus to most intentional-community-based facilitators in North America, and works with Hewlett-Packard, University of Massachusetts, the US Green Party, the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, and many other organizations. caroline@ic.org.



Laird Schaub responds:

This is a great example of clashing values. On the one hand your group likely has a value of supporting individual choice, so long as the exercise of it doesn't harm others and is otherwise consistent with your other values. As it does not appear that you have a group value against smoking or against alcohol consumption, you

probably want to support the right of individual members to choose their own path with respect to substance use.

On the other hand, you probably also have a value of being a conference center that conducts its business with integrity—by which I mean you practice what you espouse—and you may have a commitment to providing a healthy, safe environment for guests and visitors using your facilities.

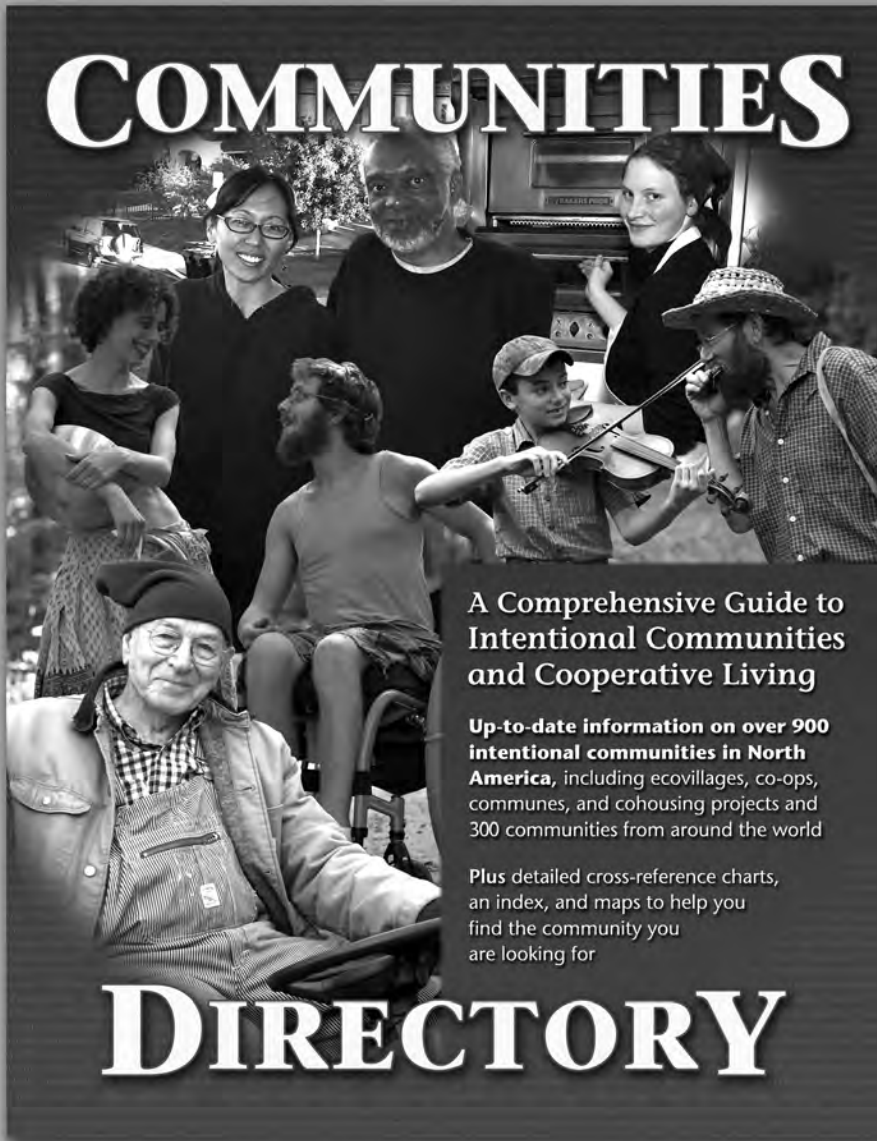
Assuming I am right about your core values, your challenge is to figure out how to balance these values appropriately on the issue of how smoking and alcohol consumption are practiced among consenting members and guests. The key to this going well is being able to talk about what's happening accurately and without judgment. If there are unresolved tensions around this topic (which there probably are), then you'll need to clear those before attempting the balancing process.

I am reasonably confident that you'll want a solution that you can openly share with potential clients, and which will accurately reflect your actual practices. You don't want either members or guests sneaking off to smoke or drink, nor do you want them shunned or embarrassed when enjoying their habits within the boundaries everyone agreed with.

In the end, your group will be watched more closely for how well you deal with tough issues than how purely you lead your lives. ❀

Laird Schaub, a member of Sandhill Farm community in Missouri, has been doing consulting work on group process since 1987. A longtime activist in community networking, he has lived in community since 1974 and been involved with the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC) since 1986; he is currently its Executive Secretary. laird@ic.org; 660-883-5545. Laird authors a blog which can be read at communityandconsensus.blogspot.com.

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



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*Beltane ritual, Lost Valley
Educational Center, Dexter,
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Marcus Lorusso

Festivals and Gatherings

At the beginning of every summer, people gathered on the banks of the river. They shared stories and music, renewed their connections with one another, and celebrated their interdependence with their home place. In many ways, their festival was timeless—in various settings all over the world, for many thousands of years, similar gatherings had reinforced ties of broader community and helped humans reaffirm their place in a larger integrated ecology.

I wasn't particularly aware of this broader context. What I knew was that I loved the music and the beautiful riverside setting, was inspired by the work of the nonprofit group (the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, founded by Pete Seeger) that had dedicated itself to cleaning up the river, and felt a strong sense of community among those who attended. I was also intrigued by an experiential, consensus-run traveling community, an environmental education program which had an information booth at the festival. Less than a year after picking up that program's brochure, I found myself at a crossroads and decided to enroll—a decision that set me on a life path leading toward longer-term community. Along with my high school's subscription to *COMMUNITIES* (which alert readers may recall hearing about two issues ago), the Hudson River Clearwater Revival had played a key role in exposing me to the possibilities of cooperative living and learning.

Since that time, festivals and gatherings have continued to reinforce and nurture larger connections in my life, and to reveal new possibilities. The meeting of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements brought the late, great Ma-

sanobu Fukuoka to UC Santa Cruz (where I was an agroecology apprentice) in 1986, helping open my eyes to more natural, permacultural food-growing techniques. For many years, the annual Bioneers Conference in the San Francisco Bay area, bringing together pioneers in solutions-oriented ecological action, provided me with additional infusions of inspiration and connection.

The Oregon Country Fair, an annual July ritual, is an indispensable seasonal activity for many of us in the Pacific Northwest and beyond. The tens of thousands of attendees form a community unto themselves for a weekend; performers, vendors, booth staffers, and volunteers forge longer-lived sub-communities as they prepare for and present the festival; and many other groups also reaffirm their ties through this event. Local gatherings of the Eugene Permaculture Guild, including seed swaps and co-sponsored "Eat Here Now" events, reinforce many ecologically-oriented Eugeniens' sense of local community. Lost Valley Educational Center, my home community, also hosts many gatherings and programs focused on sustainable living and cooperation, bringing together people from near and far to learn, explore, bond, and become inspired to spread what they've discovered into the larger world.

Despite the occasional outward showiness associated with them, festivals and gatherings are far from superficial distractions. They have the ability to affect lives profoundly. This issue of *COMMUNITIES* delves deep into that world. Please enjoy! ❁



Chris Roth edits COMMUNITIES.

Festivals and Gatherings on The Farm

By Douglas Stevenson

Over the decades The Farm Community in Summertown, Tennessee has played host to many different types and sizes of festivals, conferences, and gatherings. All have brought rewards and enrichment as well as challenges, especially for those engaged in the management and production of these events.

I came to The Farm in the early '70s as a musician, a baby boomer well steeped in the roots of rock 'n' roll. My early experience with wires and cables led me to become part of our community's electronics crew. Our responsibilities included the setup and operation of sound equipment for The Farm's in-house festivals before a crowd of 1000-plus residents. Our celebrations often included over a dozen bands as well as performances by dance troupes, skits, and acts of all types. Over the last 25 years, I have taken on a more active role, and work with a team of regulars who fill the roles necessary to insure all aspects of our events flow as smoothly as possible.

In the late '80s and early '90s, The Farm began hosting various conferences for outside groups as well as our own small festivals that were open to the public. It was no problem integrating 100 midwives, and a bit more challenging to manage 400 alternative schoolers, a crowd with kids of all ages roaming our expansive acreage of forests and fields with joyous abandon. However, as we soon discovered, groups with a focus and pur-

pose were much easier to absorb than festival-goers intent on partying 'til dawn's early light.

It's All in the Logistics

No matter what size gathering or event, the organizers must determine how they will handle the logistics, beginning with feeding, then housing, and most importantly providing sanitary facilities required to satisfy the needs of a large influx of people. Through our years of communal living, The Farm Community had learned how easy it can be to spread germs and bacteria when facilities were inadequate. While bringing in port-a-johns may take care of one immediate need, they must be accompanied by proper hand washing stations to avoid spreading colds and other illnesses through the group. On our main festival grounds, we constructed several outhouses, permanent buildings complete with running water and hand washing sinks. For very large events we have brought in extra port-a-potties as needed, but this can become quite expensive, adding to overhead and cost of production. We also established a network of campsites, running water lines and installing a spigot at each location.

Feeding the People

When it comes to providing food, potlucks can work well for small gatherings, especially when you know and trust the standards of those who will be bringing in prepared dishes. How-



ever, people attending conferences and festivals usually expect to purchase at least some of their food or have it supplied for them on site. Food vendors are an important component of the typical festival infrastructure. They provide a vital service and usually pay fees that help cover the expenses of producing an event. It is critical that the food preparation and service maintain high standards of cleanliness. Recent outbreaks of *E. coli* in the national news have helped to illustrate how easy it is for a restaurant or food facility to infect a large number of people. Hosts of an event can be held responsible for any outbreak or illness that may occur.

In general we prefer to manage the food service in-house for all our public events. The community's food preparation facilities are inspected by the local health department. Our kitchen crew has decades of experience serving groups large and small, providing high quality, tasty, and nutritious vegetarian food which we know has been prepared with the proper standard of cleanliness.

The Roar of the Crowd

Every summer, The Farm plays host to a reunion of former members and their families, usually bringing in from 300 to 500 people for a celebration that lasts about five days. Much like our mini-fests of the '70s, it is a weekend of music and

*From the top: The Farm's beautiful festival grounds.
Houses from the ecovillage tour.*



All photos courtesy of The Farm



dance along with festivities of all types. This event is closed to the public, but the good times to be had are somewhat legendary throughout our region. This led us to create spring and fall festivals for a number of years, events we hoped would satisfy the desire of those wishing to participate in a rock and roll communion on The Farm while generating a little cash flow into the community.

In a very real sense, the festival can be regarded as a small business. Staff must be hired to fill various positions, from collecting the money at the gate to parking, cleanup, and security. Technicians are needed to operate the sound system. A stage manager is necessary to insure the performance schedule flows smoothly. The list of jobs goes on and on. It can all add up to a hefty budget, costs that must be met before any profit is made, in essence determining whether the event organizers and promoters receive any compensation for their time.

In some ways a festival is a little bit like farming. You start with the seed of an idea and then spend months nurturing this vision until at last you have a single weekend to harvest the fruit of all your efforts. The weather can have a direct effect on your outcome. If it should rain during your outdoor event, no one comes and all is lost. The temperature can be too hot or too cold, each affecting the whim of your fickle audience. There are likely to be other events happening at the same time, competing for the time and attention of your potential attendees.

For the first several years, we drew in a crowd of about 300, enough to barely break even, but falling far short of what we

needed to make any money. Arts and craft vendors need a large crowd to make a festival worth their while, and in our case were disappointed, making them less likely to return the following year. After sending out mailings, posters, and hours and hours of volunteer time, it hardly seemed worth it.

At first we used bands that were willing to play for free. Some

were pretty good, others downright embarrassing. We thought if we used more professional acts, they might help draw a larger crowd. Of course this increased our overhead, especially when we hired artists with some amount of national name recognition. As the festival grew in size and exposure, we also drew the attention of a music licensing agency who demanded a hefty fee for

the performance rights of copyrighted material.

After about 10 years, the crowd had grown to 1000, still pretty small compared to major music festivals, but quite an influx into our normally quiet community. Although we promoted our events as alcohol-free, this became impossible to control, making security a larger issue. We would receive calls from frantic parents looking for their teenager who had run away for the weekend to be at our festival. Neighbors began to complain about the loud thumping bass tones rattling their windows in the wee hours of the night. We had break-ins. It all became too much.

Taken as a whole, our festivals had great vibes, great music, interesting workshops, activities for kids, cultural diversity, and a long list of other reasons why those attending loved every minute. Our vision of a small cottage industry that would generate income for the community fell far short.

*You start with the seed of an idea
and then spend months nurturing
this vision until at last you have
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the fruit of all your efforts.*



From the left: Men's circle at one of The Farm's many events. Musicians at the Unity Festival (above); community conference, in between workshops. Everybody's favorite: meal time.

Changing the Focus

A friend and I decided to scale back and we concentrated our focus on community, hosting two conferences in partnership with the Fellowship for Intentional Community, a mix of educational content with a little bit of homegrown entertainment on Saturday night. Billing this new event as "The Activist Summit," we aimed to bring political and green activists together with people from the intentional community movement. We did generate a good mix of people from both camps, and ultimately found that most of those attending were people seeking more community in their life.

Although we would have liked a bit larger crowd than the group of 125 folks who participated each year, we generated enough cash flow to cover our expenses and a little more. When hosting these types of events, one has to be prepared to offer scholarships and work trades which will help increase your numbers and the energy during your gathering, but you must keep a careful eye on the bottom line. It is easy to be generous and magnanimous before the event takes place and then find your finances coming up short when tallying up your income later. After a couple of years, I became busy with other things and moved on.

Farm Experience Weekend

For the last several years I have been working with a small team to put on spring and fall events called The Farm Experience Weekend. The purpose is to provide an in-depth look at life in community, and it is especially valuable for those interested in moving to The Farm or any community. The weekend is a blend of workshops and entertainment, and gives those attending a chance to mix and mingle with The Farm's many residents in a variety of ways.

I begin with a PowerPoint® slide show documenting our history and evolution from the largest commune in America to our financial crisis in the '80s and how we survived Reaganomics. Participants receive a detailed overview of how the community is organized today, along with a glimpse at the work of our many different nonprofits, from international relief and development work to the creation of a separate 1400-acre nature preserve that surrounds the 1750 acres owned by the community. We also go beyond the material to examine the spiritual tenets and philosophy that are the real reasons we have been able to survive and thrive through these challenging times.

This narrowly focused gathering averages in size from 20 to 40 folks, drawing people from all across the US and around the world. The mix often includes groups of college kids who receive a special student rate. It has helped bring several new residents to our community, each one an asset in their own way.

The Bioregional Congress

In September of 2009 The Farm will host the 10th Bioregional Congress, an event which has brought together a group of eco-activists (recently numbering about 300) every three years since 1984. The 2005 gathering was hosted by the Earthen community in North Carolina. Unlike most conferences that feature nationally recognized keynote speakers and experts feeding information to a largely passive audience, the Bioregional Congress aims for active participation and intense networking. Participants are directly involved in every aspect of the weeklong event, from establishing the agenda and direction of the discussion to the preparation of food. The goal is to raise the collective consciousness, rippling outward as each person returns home to share what they've learned. I look forward to this next step in the evolution of gatherings within our community. It should be fun and inspiring!

Gatherings and festivals fill an important niche in our social psyche. They remind us of the power and energy that happen when we share a common experience, coming together in celebration and communion, as one. ❀

Douglas Stevenson and his high school sweetheart/wife, Deborah, became members of The Farm Community in 1973. Douglas has served on the community's board of directors, membership committee, and is currently engaged as The Farm Manager, overseeing community development projects. He also represents The Farm as the spokesperson to the press and outside media. His company, Village Media, recently completed the editing of Volume Two of Geoph Kozen's "Visions of Utopia" video project, profiling 11 different intentional communities (fic.ic.org/video/). Douglas and Deborah have shared a residence with lifelong friends since 1985. They enjoy spending time with their grandchildren, who (along with their daughter and her husband) also live on The Farm. See www.the-farmcommunity.com and www.thefarmblog.org.



Fellowship for Intentional Community Events

By Maïkwe Schaub Ludwig

At the end of the circle closing our Art of Community conference in Seattle in September 2006, a woman came up to me whom I hadn't met during the weekend. She wanted to talk to me about her daughter, who had recently moved to a community, much to her mother's dismay. With tears in her eyes, this woman told me that she had come to our conference to try to understand. Seeing me up in front at the mic, confident in heels with blond liberally streaked into my dark hair, she had seen the image she would connect with, and suddenly it seemed that maybe their two worlds were not so far apart.

This encounter has stuck with me over the past few years. Here was a mom, scared silly by the stereotypes we work so hard to undo, who had nonetheless decided that educating herself was more productive than judging her daughter. At the end of the conversation, I felt I could see in her the spirit and spark that must have led her daughter to community, and I was sure we had helped heal something for her family.

The thing I find most inspiring about the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC) is that we work with everyone who is in the community-building business: cohousers, ecovillagers, cooperators of all sorts, people reaching over the fence to shake their neighbors' hands, potluck organizers...in addition to a good number of ol' fashioned communes. And yes, we even work with people who don't know what to make of community-building and are trying to sort it out. This is one group that takes the idea of cooperation among cooperators to heart.

As the events team chair for the FIC, I get to meet, greet and—when my team gets it right—inspire hundreds of people each time we get together. These people come from an amazingly wide range of backgrounds. We cross-fertilize each other's projects; we talk shop; we walk away not only with our pockets stuffed with new business cards, but with new little impressions on each other's hearts that feed into making the world a more vibrant and connected place.

I've had countless conversations at our events that start with, "I've been dreaming about this for so long..." and end in a clear pathway for pursuing social connections that are soul-feeding and timeless. Activists come to connect around a certain issue, and, almost inevitably, leave with an understanding that the "we" who are "in this together" from a much larger pool than they previously believed. I've gotten to sit in on some of the most moving conversations I can remember, as current communitarians share their stories and struggles and help each other think through the very real challenges of living cooperatively.

Sometimes, the conversations are not so easy. When I posted a recent note to our email newsletter about our upcoming event in the Bay Area next fall, I got an email back from a gentleman who requested that we be smoke-, alcohol-, animal product- and various other things-free so that it would be a "safe" environment for peace-loving people. My challenge as the leader of this team is to do my best to provide a positive environment, but to not let any one person determine what exactly that is. If I said, "no smokers," how am I walking the talk of

consensus-building from different perspectives? I find that community-building is as much facilitation as it is having a vision. I'm still not sure how my conversations with this man will shake out, but I can say with certainty that a narrow definition of who qualifies to play with us is never going to fly within the FIC.

Once every couple years, we travel somewhere in the US to create a three-day event with all the usual conference stuff: workshops, tabling, speakers, a banquet, and networking galore. But we do something else on those weekends: we create bonds between people with similar dreams and send ripples out into the local community that last for years. One of the unusual features of our conferences is a "Meet the Communities" session where groups in all states of forming, living, and communal elderhood can get up and *spiel* to a captive audience for a couple minutes and then have time to find new potential members.

This is how, in the spring of 2008 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, one of my organizing team mates first met her forming cohousing group. A local staffer of the New Mexico Media Literacy project test-flew a new presentation about media, community, and sustainability. Because he had a conference to do it at, he won the support of his boss to take the time to develop it, and in this way we've had a tiny effect on the curriculum offered to the public in New Mexico. We like to think that people make life-changing connections at our conferences.

Putting together a conference about community isn't so different from any other nonprofit service delivery. We have to think: what do people who would be attracted to our conferences really want? For us, this question means, "What are people looking for when they go looking for 'community'?" We come up with answers that sound pretty abstract: connection, support for their life mission, a sense of realness, support to live more sustainably, learning how to live one's values without being dogmatic about it. The trick—and the fun part for me—is to then find workshops and speakers that have something real to offer to meet those needs, and to find event staff who can inspire an immediate sense of "tribe" for people.

For some who come to FIC events, it is about getting a chance to experience that elusive thing called community, to taste what they've been dreaming about. Of course, it is hard to give this to people in 48 hours. The best option really, is to go visit existing communities. But we try to think about what we can do on the weekend that will give people a taste of that. So we set up hang-out spaces where people can just be together, we try to have at least one meal together, and we do a fundraiser for the FIC so that people who want to contribute to something larger than themselves get a chance to do that too. (We also dress up

in goofy clothes and let our inner hams come out, because if it ain't fun, it ain't sustainable, and that's one of the other values we promote.) And we tell our stories and invite people to share their own.

I think of our events as a chance to get knee-deep into the real stuff of community: from the heady, like how we make decisions together and how to structure your community finances to be both fair and practical, to the more mundane (and some community veterans would say more impactful on a daily basis), like how to figure out who does the dishes and what to do when your neighbor's dog is barking at 2 a.m....again.

It's hard to get neck-deep in one weekend, but we help people get their feet wet, mostly by having an organizational commit-

ment to being transparent and open about both the inspiring, loving parts of community and the stuff that makes you want to pull your hair out in handfals.

For people who long for community in general but can't see themselves ever joining a community, our events offer a glimpse into some of

I've gotten to sit in on some of the most moving conversations I can remember, as current communitarians share their stories and struggles and help each other think through the very real challenges of living cooperatively.

the best social laboratories for cooperation anywhere. For instance, when you live with others, you don't have the option of "leaving the conflicts at work" but instead you see the person who is driving you nuts at dinner. And on the village green. And from your front porch while you sip your morning tea. Once you learn to navigate social dynamics in that more intense and full-time environment, you have figured out some miraculous things about the potential of humans to get past their differences and focus on the vision, and humanity, you share. What nonprofit or social change group can't benefit from that knowledge? There's a lot of exportable knowledge in the communities movement, and a lot of commonality between different types of community-building, and we are committed to sharing it.

Part of our job is helping everyone—from community seekers to frustrated founders, from nonprofit managers to that mom who was baffled by her daughter's seemingly crazy choice—to touch that universal core of ourselves that longs for being better connected. Ultimately, we are just a group of connection veterans in the business of hope. ❀

Ma'ikwe Schaub Ludwig teaches consensus-inspired facilitation with her husband, Laird Schaub, and workshops on sustainability and starting communities. She lives at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage and is the author of Passion as Big as a Planet: Evolving Eco-activism in America. Ma'ikwe chairs the Fellowship for Intentional Community's events team, and (in her own words) is usually the chick up at the mic during FIC events. Please visit www.ic.org for more information about the FIC's events and other activities.



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Francine Hughes

Adventures in Temporary Community:

An Interview with Liat Silverman

By Kim Scheidt

On a breezy last day of September, I had the pleasure of meeting with Liat Silverman. She trekked the three-quarter-mile walk to my cabin at Red Earth Farms from her home at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage (outside Rutledge, Missouri), where she has lived for a year and a half. A lively woman in her 20s, Liat values living in community, and she enjoys participating in festivals and gatherings of many kinds—a form of temporary community. I was excited to meet up with Liat and hear about the experiences she's had with the gatherings she's taken part

in recently: the Superhero ride, Burning Man, and the Rainbow Gathering.

Superheroes

Kim: You participated in the Superhero Haul of Justice ride across Missouri this month. Can you tell me about the Superheroes and how their group functions as a community?

Liat: The Superheroes are a temporary intentional community that never stays in one place for long. They are a group of

Group shot of the Superheroes with Patch-Co (Liat) at far left.



Liat outside of her home at Dancing Rabbit—a converted school bus.

people united in the common goals of biking and doing service. The group operates by consensus, and the decisions on where to go and what to do are made as a group. There is no established hierarchy, and anyone who has been a Superhero in the past can plan a ride. Every ride is different because they each take place in different locations, are composed of different people, hit different roadblocks, and have different amazing adventures.

small groups of people and rotated daily. This helps ensure that everything we need gets done and everyone pulls equal weight.

Kim: How does someone become a Superhero?

Liat: Every Superhero creates their own identity; this usually involves a fun name and a costume. For example, I chose the identity Patch-Co* because I enjoy sewing, patching, and reusing things. As Patch-Co, I go around doing what I can to “patch the problems of the world.” My costume was fairly simple: I had

Every participant comes from a unique background. Riders range from toddlers to retired folks. Some have graduated college, hold professional jobs, and have kids, while others perhaps were unschooled, hop trains, and live very alternatively. Some Superheroes have biked across the United States while others may have never biked in their life! I think the diversity of participants adds greatly to what the group becomes.

I was impressed with how organized and prepared the group is. Riders come together for one month out of the year, yet are strongly united as a group. One thing that builds the togetherness is the emphasis placed on ritual. The rituals vary; some are lighthearted and silly, while others are deep and thought-provoking. I found that taking part in these rituals helped us bond quickly. It was a way to learn more about the other Superheroes and to share in their daily experiences. Also, jobs (such as cooking, navigating, and giving massages) are given out to

many patches on my clothes and a cape trailing behind me.

You can either start at the beginning of the ride, or join up along the way. Every rider needs a bike, a way of carrying their own gear, a good attitude, a desire to help others, and a willingness to be open to whatever comes along.

Burning Man

Kim: You were at Burning Man this year. What was memorable for you about that event?

Liat: Tens of thousands of people from all different backgrounds come together for one week each year to congregate in the dry, desolate desert and create a huge, temporary community full of life and activity. Some people have their own private camps while others set up large camps that function like subcommunities where people live together, share meals, hold workshops, and party.

Most people were very friendly. If I needed a place to take shelter from a sandstorm, I would duck into the nearest tent, bus, or geodesic dome and was always welcomed with a smile.

The thing I was most impressed with about Burning Man is that almost everything there is initiated and led by the participants. Anyone can present a workshop, lead a dance or yoga class, or perform in front of a crowd. People are very giving with their time, energy, and resources.

Kim: Were there any negatives for you?

Liat: I didn't feel the festival was good ecologically, and since I make ecological living an important part of my existence, that was hard for me. I saw an abundance of waste, and this bummed me out much of the week. I was also put off by the entrance fee, which I feel selects for people who are financially well-off and discriminates against the economic backgrounds of the majority of people in this world.

Rainbow Gathering

Kim: You have also attended a Rainbow Gathering that was held in your home state of Florida. How does that experience compare or contrast with your time at Burning Man?

Liat: As with Burning Man, you see a great diversity of backgrounds among the attendees of Rainbow Gatherings—although I would have to say that the Rainbow Gathering is more accessible to people who earn lower wages. I saw a lot of the freegan**, dumpster-diving culture evident there. It also seemed more eco-friendly to me.

Similar to other festivals, there were lots of different things

going on simultaneously, so what you choose to be involved with will determine your time there. There were many repeat attendees. And really, it is the mix of people which makes each gathering into what it is.

Festivals and Community

Kim: Why do you enjoy attending festivals and gatherings?

Liat: I enjoy attending these types of festivities for the experience of it all. I like to travel and meet lots of people, but I don't like cities or suburbs. Taking part in these events is a great outlet for me to get away from home temporarily and still fulfill my desire to be living in community. A big part of the attraction for me is attending workshops and learning new skills. I also enjoy the social networking aspect of these gatherings, and I typically come away with new friendships and good contacts.

Kim: What is it that you value most about living in community, whether as your regular home or as a temporary community?

Liat: Living, sharing, and working together with others is what I seek in life. There are challenges to living in community, but there are so many benefits. I value the ability to borrow tools

from neighbors, share resources and living space with community members, work on projects with friends, eat meals with other people, and vent my frustrations and emotions with friends who understand where I am coming from. I also really like that I live close enough to people to simply walk outside my door and meet up with someone. I don't ever have to think about getting in a motorized vehicle in order to be social.

Kim: What advice would you give to someone who is planning to take part in one of these festivals or gatherings?

Liat: Go into the experience without expectations, and be open to whatever might happen. ✿

*I like to travel and meet lots of people,
but I don't like cities or suburbs.
Taking part in these events is a great
outlet for me to get away from home
temporarily and still fulfill my desire
to be living in community.*



Chad Knepp

Kim Scheidt is a founding member of Red Earth Farms in Rutledge, Missouri. She earns money doing accounting work for the Fellowship for Intentional Community in addition to her full-time job as mommy to a toddler. She enjoys reading, cooking fabulous dinners with wood heat, and planting things in the dirt.

*The term "co" is a gender-neutral noun or pronoun that can take the place of the words woman, man, she, he, etc. It is common jargon among members of many intentional communities.

**Wikipedia defines freeganism as "an anti-consumerist lifestyle whereby people employ alternative living strategies based on limited participation in the conventional economy and minimal consumption of resources."



Burning Man:

Experiencing the Playa Community

By Kayla Wexelberg

The first community I came across during my recent studies of intentional communities happened to be a temporary community. Burning Man is the largest art festival in the world and has become widely known as a week-long intentional artist community.

Burning Man History

Burning Man began in 1986 on the evening of the Summer Solstice. Larry Harvey and Jerry James decided to build a wooden structure in the shape of a human. The wooden art piece, approximately eight feet tall, was meant to be an effigy of a lost love from Larry's past. They set the figure up on Baker Beach in San Francisco and lit a flame. As the figure burned, it drew a crowd of intrigued onlookers. This was the most remarkable

event that had occurred on that small beach. That evening a woman stepped forth and held the unlit hand of the figure; the wind had forced the flame down and off the left hand of the structure, so the woman held it as the rest of the woman burned away. This gesture was the first of many spontaneous art performances throughout Burning Man's history. About 20 people came that night. The following year, when the event repeated itself, the crowd quadrupled in size. This time the man was 20 feet high, with 80 onlookers in awe of its blazing glory.

Over the next four years, the Burning of the Man remained in San Francisco at Baker Beach. The man grew in size and so did the crowds. By 1990 the Man had reached its now consistent height of 40 feet, and around 800 participants gathered to admire the spectacle. However, the crowds had swelled to



All photos by Kayla Wexelberg

From the left: Temple at sunset. On the Playa during the day and at night. (Burning Man Festival 2008.)

an overwhelming size for the quaint Baker Beach community and soon the police came to stop the burning. Larry Harvey and Jerry James convinced the police to allow them to simply erect the figure on the beach and not burn it. It was then when the proposal to move the burning to a different, more remote location was introduced. Black Rock Desert in Nevada quickly became the home for the annual Burning Man event, and along with the change in location the date also switched from Summer Solstice to Labor Day weekend. Larry called the empty lake bed (wet during the winter months) in which the festival now occurs the *Playa*, because in late summer it is composed entirely of dry mud that has the tendency to crack and crumble into dust, similar to the composition of sand. The change in location allowed the event to lengthen to a week and provide room for larger attendance.

Festival Infrastructure and Logistics

Burning Man prides itself on having the most sustainable festival infrastructure that has ever been created—part of the “intention” that binds together this community. In terms of environmental consciousness, Larry Harvey and his large crew also pride themselves on practicing LNT (Leave No Trace). At the end of each festival the Burning Man clean-up crew stays an extra month to make sure that all remnants of the festival are erased. All “Burners” (participants) are expected to clean up

their own MOOP (Matter Out Of Place). One of the requirements printed on the Burning Man ticket is two hours of volunteer cleaning of the Playa. The cost of the ticket starts at \$295, and rises as the time of the event approaches. The ticket does not include food, water, or camp fees. Revenues from ticket sales directly fund the infrastructure of the city. This includes the setup of the post office, airport, medical services, art installation moving devices, clean up crew, and a year-long office headquarters, mostly to organize the large number of Burning Man volunteers. Volunteers are widely known as the “makers” of the Burning Man community. They contribute so much love and energy into ensuring everyone’s Burning Man experience goes safely and smoothly.

Rhythm Wave Camp

I was fortunate to be a “Burner” in Black Rock City in 2008, and to take part in the colossal event, Burning Man’s 23rd year of existence. Before I traveled from Berkeley to Black Rock City, I signed up to be a member of the Rhythm Wave Camp. This dance camp specializes in the meditative movement of the five rhythms: Flowing, Staccato, Chaos, Lyrical, and Stillness. The dance lasts an hour or two as a DJ smoothes the transitions between the waves of rhythm. Each camp gives a gift to the Black Rock City Community and ours was a large bamboo dance floor.



Being part of a community is very important. There is normally a set fee, which includes camp area, water, kitchen, shower setup area, a shade structure, and the camp gift. There is also a food option, in which you pay a bit and the camp provides you with food. Being part of a camp helps one to create a smaller sub-community within Black Rock City, a place to return to after a day out on the Playa. I found this camp experience to be extremely rewarding. The connections and family I formed contributed greatly to my comfort and acceptance in Black Rock City. Camp is not a hired service; everyone takes part in creating the camp area, which for us included the bamboo dance floor, the shade structure, the kitchen, water containers, etc. Everything is erected by the members of the camp. Essentially, the camp acts as a small town, with each individual assuming a specific role and contributing what he/she can. I volunteered to be part of the meal plan committee to do my service to the camp.

Journey and Arrival

Before leaving for Black Rock City, I knew little of the exciting camp I was about to encounter. The community that was built made all the stress of preparing for the event worth it. The process of arriving at the festival was rather tedious. I set off with my boyfriend Gabriel en route to destination Black Rock Desert on the long straight shot to Nevada. It took only six hours to arrive at the entryway to the festival. However, we ended up waiting another six hours until we were actually able to enter Black Rock City. The dust storms that evening were so chaotic and unresisting that the gateway to Burning Man was closed for several hours until it let up. At 1:30 a.m., we finally arrived at our destination. Unable to find our camp, we slept in

the car that night, and in the morning awoke to a fantasyland displayed on the desert floor before us.

Finding our camp was like coming home. It was such a warm and exhilarating experience meeting new people and sharing the excitement and energy of the festival with them. Being able to share my love of cooking and contributing to my newfound com-

These communities stretch beyond the participants involved, and I believe they help broaden the minds of others and cause a shift in our ever-globalizing world.

munity, I felt fulfilled, and that I was playing my part and truly becoming a member of my community. Everything came together smoothly as I quickly became comfortable in my new world. Contribution seems to be an intrinsic part of the Burning Man experience. Every Burner feels

a need and desire to give back to the community that gives them so much. After participants leave Black Rock City and return to the “real world,” many still feel a desire to give to one another in the form of loving-kindness. Unfortunately, many begin to feel disheartened by the lack of reciprocation. There needs to be a give and take for it to flow naturally without any remorse, and this is how Burning Man succeeds.

Life on the Playa

Each day, Gabriel and I would set off out onto the Playa with our beat-up “Playa” bikes. I felt a certain amount of warmth and comfort biking around Burning Man. Each participant was here for the same basic reason. There was no need to fight, steal, or exclude one another. In fact, it was quite the opposite; everywhere I turned I met a new friend. We were all just humans thriving in the same world, with the same intentions; to be present and enjoy the society created around us. Every day I would meet new people and welcome them into my life. I would often return to camp bearing gifts from people I had encountered during my adventures around town. Each morning I would set



From the left: Biking the Promenade. Rhythm Wave. Sunset at the Festival. (Burning Man Festival 2008.)

off with no knowledge of what to expect that day. I had no set plans but to ride the wave of life and to be comfortable with taking any turns that came my way. I truly lived in the present as a naked human facing the world—as a newborn baby seeing everything for the first time.

By the end of Burning Man, I had fallen in love with Black Rock City and my Rhythm Wave community. I learned that being part of a community involved constant work for all participants. There was always clearing or setting up to be done around camp. But along with work, there was always play. Towards the end of the festival I found myself fully entertained by just staying in my camp and enjoying everyone's company. Each person taught me something new, and I in turn gave what I could to him or her. We all banded together during the trying dust storms, which often rose up quite rapidly and could last for hours. The weather played a key role in my experience, helping to develop the warrior within in order to push through and take the whiteouts.

Returning to the “Real World”

Returning from Burning Man was rather shocking to my system. I went through a week of pure exhaustion and minor depression trying to recover from my experience. Burning Man was so intense and different from the “real world” that I found it hard to reintegrate myself when I arrived back home in Berkeley. I had become accustomed to my life out on the Playa, and then all of a sudden Black Rock City had turned into a distant dream world. It had all gone by so quickly. However, after the culture shock wore off, the feelings and lessons I had learned in Burning Man slowly crept back to me, this time in a much more desired fashion. I found myself approaching the “real world” in ways that I had approached Burning Man. Every day I would open my eyes and all the errands and work I had to get done quickly formed a stressful list in my mind. Then I slowly took a deep breath and reminded myself that it is just another

day. Who knows what will happen and it doesn't matter: it's just life. When I remember to take each moment as is, I appreciate life, and become more innately grateful for being in this world. Because of this exercise I am less stressed and find myself more giving and inclusive towards others. The energy and presence I have now give off a more permanent and positive light to the individuals around me. My actions in the “real world” in turn affect others who begin to trust and be open to their surroundings, including new individuals like me.

In my opinion, the Burning Man community has done an excellent job in helping to shift the world towards a brighter light. The welcoming atmosphere it creates within its borders stretches far beyond the limits of its seven-day installation. During my time in Burning Man I was able to conduct several surveys of various “Burners” and I discovered that many participants held the same opinion. When I asked Vytas Sunspirai, a friend of mine, if there were any aspects of Burning Man that he would want to bring back and incorporate in his daily life at home, he answered:

“Certainly. I had a moment a while ago where I had challenges with some of my colleagues in the workplace. And then I thought, ‘Wait...I do have good social skills, just in a different context.’ I just needed to bring that skill to a different setting. I realized the lessons I learned here, in Burning Man, I could also apply elsewhere.”

Vytas and many other participants have taken the lessons learned in Burning Man and applied them to the real world, stretching the energy of the festival far beyond its limits of a temporary intentional community. These communities stretch beyond the participants involved, and I believe they help broaden the minds of others and cause a shift in our ever-globalizing and capitalist world. Vytas' colleagues would agree that there was a shift in Vytas' thinking and acting, which resulted in a shift in themselves. Moreover, the lessons he learned in Burning Man helped him to adjust the way he interacts with those around him in the “real world.” He brought a more personal, welcoming atmosphere to the workplace, helping others to feel comfortable and accepted, much as I and many others have done with the Burning Man experience. ❀



Kayla Wexelberg is an ethnographer and a photojournalist who is completing her senior thesis research on intentional communities. She spent four months in 2008 traveling around the United States experiencing and participating in different intentional communities including Burning Man, Still Meadow, and Dancing Rabbit. Kayla is from Berkeley, California and will graduate from Global College of Long Island University in May 2009 with a degree in Global Studies.



Comin' Home to the Rainbow

By Scott Shuker

“Welcome home, brothers and sisters! Lovin’ you!” is usually the first greeting I receive upon arriving at the Rainbow Gathering, an appreciated one after a very long drive and long hike down the main trail with full camping gear. Newcomers are surprised, even shocked, by such openness from strangers, but soon come to express the same openness to others. Sleep deprivation actually adds to the sense of elation I feel, and I am anxious to get to my campsite. Upon first arrival I am greeted at “the Gate” by dedicated folks who have kept the campfire going all night to welcome people home. After getting oriented, I look for a parking spot, then go to the “Welcome Home” kitchen for a bite to eat and say “Howdy folks.” I ask where things are and after some uplifting conversation, head down the trail to “Main Meadow”—the center of the Gathering—to find my mates and camp. Off in the distance I can hear a rousing “We LOOOOOOOOOVE You!”

I’m home.

The Rainbow Family Gatherings are free, non-commercial festivals which occur throughout the year worldwide (always on public land in North America, usually on private land on other continents), to heal Mother Earth and each other. The Gatherings grew out of the 1960s counterculture, originating from two festivals known as Vortex which took place in Oregon in 1970 and Washington state in ’71, attracting tens of thousands of people. The first known Rainbow Gathering happened in the Rocky Mountain National Park in northern Colorado July 1-7, 1972. That year, the White House called out the National Guard to stop it, causing the Family to move to another site. Thus began an antagonistic relationship with the federal government which unfortunately continues today.

Why the metaphor “rainbow”? Many say it is because the rainbow in nature has many colors which remain separate and autonomous while creating a beau-

tiful phenomenon of light. In that spirit we gather as free individuals working together to create an alternative to the consumer- and fear-based culture. Gatherings are not just festivals. We are an international intentional community, void of borders, who see ourselves as a human family, making anyone with a belly button a member (though this consensus was amended to include those who don’t, like test-tube babies and extra-terrestrials—ha ha). We even have nicknames to describe our...uh...diversity: “High Holies” (parental and/or authority figures), “Drainbows” (adults who do little while “draining” others’ energy), “A-Camper/Roaddogs” (alcoholic hobos), “Tourists” (high-tech gear, spiffy-clean weekenders with lots of money), “Dog Warriors” (black-clad, pierced, and anarchistic), and “Wingnuts” (crazies).

We have many traditions that make a gathering Rainbow. We firmly assert and maintain our First Amendment right to gather peacefully on public lands. It must



All photos by Garrick Beck

Left: Thousands gathered in large meadow for dinner circle at Colorado '06 national gathering. Top and left on this page: The latest Granola Funk Theater designs. Bottom right: People having a bite outside of Kid Village.

be totally free (no fees are charged). All money is given by donation, usually to the "Magic Hat" which is focalized (facilitated) by a Banking Council who distributes it as equitably as possible to meet Family needs. All work is done voluntarily. We camp in ways respectful and sensitive to nature and leave no trace after we leave, even reseeding and restoring where necessary. Sanitation is an important priority, difficult yet manageable in a primitive situation. In North America, a gathering must always happen on public land to avoid any ownership authority. We have no legal status, no leaders, and make all Family decisions by consensus. "Ignore all rumors of cancellation and organization" is one of our mottos. There is a silent meditation for world peace every July 4th morning until noon, broken by a colorful children's parade.

We strive to solve all conflicts non-violently and maintain a health and safety squad known as "Shanti Sena" (peacekeepers). Weapons, especially firearms,

are prohibited (though law enforcement agents refuse to respect this). We move to a different state for the 7/1-7/7 National every year. Alcohol consumption is discouraged and kept at the parking lot or "A-Camp" (A stands for alcohol). We publish a yearly listing of names, addresses, and phone numbers, given voluntarily, in the "Rainbow Guide," as well as a yearly newsletter known as the "All Ways Free." All the music is homegrown and acoustic, electronic music being kept to the parking lot.

And the food! It's to "die for," served with love and care. We feed ourselves through a system of temporary kitchens which all serve whenever a group of people feel like cooking and serving, as well as dinner at Main Circle every evening at "Rainbow Time." Small gatherings might have only one kitchen. Large internationals may have up to 100. I have always loved "kitchen-hopping" in the evenings for a wide array of delectables and "zu-zus"(sweets) and might even

run into a drum circle, music jam, or story-telling. The names of the specialty camps and kitchens are as diverse as the sub-tribes who attend: Lovin' Ovens, C.A.L.M. (The Center for Alternative Living Medicine), Warriors of the Light, Phat Kids, Jesus Camp, Bread of Life, Kid Village, Tea Time, Popcorn Palace, Montana Camp, Safe Swingers, Brew-Ha-Ha, and the Granola Funk Theater. My favorite is Info, a.k.a. Information and Rumor Control, which receives and disseminates information about the gathering for anyone who needs it, including maps, guides, newsletters, and legal info. "Rumors stopped...and started here," we like to say.

A Forest Service supervisor once described the gathering as a "cosmic accident." But it is anything but an accident. The process of creating the gathering is very intentional, organic, and voluntary. It begins at least a year before when the region is chosen by consensus at "Vision Council." Scouts volunteer to look at maps, camp on potential sites with lots of meadows, campsites, firewood, and clean water, and meet the locals. Later they rendezvous at "Spring Council" to agree on a site. Shortly thereafter the word gets out on the "Rainbow Grapevine," then inevitably to the internet. Soon after, folks show up to begin "Seed Camp," spending weeks building an infrastructure of water taps and pipelines, digging slit-trench latrines known as "shitters," clearing trails, and developing fire pits. The first kitchens are developed, sensitive areas are identified and protected, parking determined, food supplies coordinated, Banking Council focalized, and Main Meadow chosen.

During the main part of the gathering one can attend a multitude of events emphasizing creativity and sharing. The "circle" is the most common way of doing that in Rainbowland. There are drums, heartsongs, singing, meals, meditation,

(continued on p. 73)



All photos courtesy of NFNC

Top left: Big Top Goes Up. Miaya helps raise the circus tent used as a dining hall. (Summer Camp West 2004.) Top right: Dome Construction. Sixteen feet in the air, Thia assists as Francesca stretches to place the next strut in the 40-foot diameter geodesic dome used as a meeting space. (Summer Camp East 2008.) Bottom: Creek Lunch. A rock in the creek makes an intimate spot for lunch-time conversation. (Summer Camp East 2008.)

Network for a New Culture Camps

By Pati Diehl, Melanie Rios, Michael Rios, and Sarah Taub

Melanie: During my first day or two at Network for a New Culture Summer Camp in 1999, I felt uncomfortable, and labeled the experience “false intimacy.” Here I was, gazing into the eyes of a stranger for far longer than seemed proper, laying my hand over a stranger’s heart, and listening to our group leader ask us to imagine sending love to this person. Whoa! I feared for what might come next, since normal boundaries had been set aside. But the funny thing was, by the end of camp, after sharing this and many other experiences with a hundred other campers, this same type of exercise created in me a feeling of authentic and safe intimacy, a deep feeling of love for these particular people and for humanity in general. I wondered what had happened in these ten days to bring about this transformation. Would this sense of overflowing connection persist after camp was over?

At Network for a New Culture (NFNC) camps, currently located in Oregon, West Virginia, and Hawaii, adults come together to learn about and practice ways of living together different from the norms of mainstream culture, experimenting with new ways of relating to themselves, to their work, to others, and to the world. Workshops and other activities encourage participants

to explore intimacy, freedom, and radical personal responsibility, with the goal of fostering the personal empowerment and emotional resilience that would allow a cooperative, nonviolent culture to emerge. The strong relationships that form at camp create the basis for a vibrant community all year long.

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intimacy isn’t just another word for sex;
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being truly open about who we
are and what we want.*

Intimacy and Transparency

At NFNC camps, intimacy isn’t just another word for sex; it’s about “transparency,” being truly open about who we are and what we want. This begins with honest self-reflection, asking ourselves about what we are really feeling and

thinking, even if the answers embarrass us. At one opening session, a couple told us what their spoken dialog might have been when they first met each other, along with their internal dialog. “Hello,” said the man; then to himself he said “Wow, I love her outfit, and her smile. I wonder if she’s single? Does she notice the zit that popped out on my face this morning?” It was an amusing skit that encouraged us to look at our own internal dialogs as we met each other.

Charla: I found it relaxing to live in a community where you didn’t have to pretend you were feeling great all the time. At first,



Top: Cuddle Pile. Campers bliss out and connect in a small section of a very large cuddle pile. (Summer Camp West 2004.) Bottom left: Orientation Crowd. The entire camp gathers in the dome for orientation. (Summer Camp West 2004.) Bottom right: Lounge. The outdoor lounge at Summer Camp West. (Summer Camp West 2007.)

I thought I'd be expected to hug everyone all the time. Not so. The hugs I gave were from the heart, not the mind. They started deep in the body and I felt I was "at choice" all the time. I could live the rainbow of my emotions without embarrassment or shame. I could reach out or withdraw according to my own rhythm. I learned to give myself empathy, and to feel respected by others.

The norm at camp is to share freely with others what we are thinking and feeling—while always being “at choice.” One way that this transparency is practiced is the ZEGG Forum (not related to Landmark Forum). It is a listening circle to which we can bring problems, achievements, and issues, or just show ourselves to the community. People take turns walking around in the center while talking about what’s true for them in that moment. A “Forum leader” sometimes walks alongside this person to deepen the sharing, or to encourage them to more dramatically express themselves. While the goal of the forum is simply to share rather than to solve problems, often shifts occur simply as a result of understanding each other.

Sarah: *When W. arrived at camp, he was angry about the work shifts he had been assigned. As work coordinator, I had a poor first impression of him; he was socially awkward and did not make eye contact. A few days later, he got up in Forum. He shared with the group his longing to connect with others in a loving way, and his lifelong inability to do so. He had been angry about his assignments because they conflicted with a workshop that he desperately hoped would be able to help him. Because of this sharing, I was able to see him as a loving spirit with a difficulty in perceiving and responding to social cues. During camp clean-up, I had the privilege of having him as my work partner; it was one of the most harmonious shared work experiences I've ever had.*

Camp organizers, who are all volunteers, try to model this transparency, openly sharing issues that come up between them. At the second NFNC camp, held in 1996, conflict broke out among the organizers:

Miaya: *I was mortified that our dirty laundry was being aired so publicly. Things heated up so high that, in one Forum, my brother offered an "old culture" invitation to my partner to step outside and slug it out. Surprisingly, the feedback that we heard from the campers was mainly appreciation for our openness to share so much of our discord and angst, and willingness to look like fools. There were many hurt feelings among the organizers during that second summer camp, but, in the end, we all knew we had just had a beautiful trial by fire.*

A “Fishbowl” structure provides another opportunity for participants to practice transparency. The campers are divided into two groups, such as parents and childfree adults, men and

women, or straight and queer. One group sits in the center and speaks among themselves while the other group listens in silence.

Melanie: *I remember one time listening to men talk about their experiences with impotence. It was like being a fly on the wall of a men's group, and I felt my heart expanding with compassion.*

“Seven-Minute Dates” are another format that fosters people getting to know each other at camp. People partner with someone for a short time to discuss a topic offered by the group leader, such as “Was it easy for you to make and keep friends when you were younger?”

Bodhi: *Cuddled face-to-face with a new friend, I shared my past struggles with being socially acceptable—the enormous effort of pretending to be "normal" when inside I felt very much the stranger in an increasingly strange land.*

There’s playfulness as well—the kids at camp aren’t the only ones who get to have fun. Campers keep on the lookout for pretentious or spoofable moments, and there are plenty!

Camper: *I know that it's not the time for lost-and-found announcements—but could someone help me? I can't find my chakras!*

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Freedom of Choice and Personal Responsibility

One mainstream norm that is challenged is monogamy as the only option for responsible sexual relationships. At camp, all loving relationship styles are honored, including celibacy, monogamy, and open relationships such as polyamory. Workshops offer guidance on creating fulfilling romantic relationships. In one workshop, participants practice asking for what they want while respecting each other’s boundaries. A camp aphorism is that “It’s okay to ask if it’s okay to hear ‘no.’” We find that “no” is the most intimate thing you can hear from another human being—because if you can receive their “no,” you can trust their “yes.”

Sometimes campers have strong feelings, such as embarrassment, or anger, or jealousy; they are encouraged to feel their feelings fully, while letting go of demands and expectations they have for others. As always, each one is “at choice.”

Living in a culture that is truly “at choice,” while practicing radical personal responsibility, can be startling when someone first arrives. At a workshop, one person may come a half hour late; another is lying on the floor, apparently asleep, just a few feet from the presenter; another gets up to leave halfway through. Since none of these activities directly interferes with others’ participation, no notice or offense is taken.

Likewise, camp is clothing-optional; and this reflects the real meaning of “at choice” as well. People are free to wear whatever they choose—or not. The usual result is that a few campers are



Top: Goodbyes At Morning Circle. Four campers who are departing early say goodbye at Morning Circle. (Summer Camp East 2007.) Middle: Massage Chain. Shared work leads to shared support and intimacy, as campers build a 40-foot geodesic dome for a meeting space. (Summer Camp East 2008.) Bottom: River Gang. Campers relax by the river. (Summer Camp West 2004.)



actually nude, about a quarter are not “street legal” in some way, and the rest are covered to a more-or-less conventional degree. Clothes are for costume or comfort, not emotional protection.

First-year camper: *It felt like I had a gym membership with a special focus on the muscle group of “choice” and “choosing.”*

Experimenting with New Ways of Being

Experimentation is at the heart of camp. Rather than offering a set of “solutions” for personal and social problems, the emphasis is on developing the skills and the willingness to try new things, and sharing the results with other campers. People often try out new identities or behaviors that might feel unsafe in the mainstream world.

One person who attended camp for several years seemed painfully shy. One day, some campers asked if he’d be willing to try an experiment. They brought him to the camp costume closet, and dressed him up by pinning red hearts on his white shirt and giving him a red cape and white leotards to wear. They coached him on how to stand up tall and smile with confidence. Then they introduced him to everyone at the morning circle as “Passion Man,” and requested that he warmly hug everyone he met for the remainder of that day who was willing to play this game. He enthusiastically hugged people that day and for the rest of camp, even after returning to his normal clothing.

During the past few years, one new way of being that many men have explored is becoming more comfortable expressing physical affection with each other. The women from the early years were good at cuddling and hugging people of all genders, and all campers understood that cuddling with another person didn’t necessarily mean sex was available, or even of interest. But the men in the early years of camp seemed to be afraid of touching each other.

Michael: *By 2002, another man and I decided it was time to change things. In a men’s meeting, we stood up, moved to the center, and cuddled each other—and invited the others to do the same. One by one, each man moved toward the center, touching, then later cuddling with each other. In 2003, my friend and I got together ahead of time to figure out how to make the same point that year. We got to the men’s group slightly late, and found the entire group was already one giant cuddle pile!*

Owning Our Sexuality

Sexuality is dealt with openly at each camp. There are workshops on erotic energy, safer sex, sexual healing, and more. Over the years, because of an atmosphere of openness, much of the charge on this topic has dissipated, and many campers discuss their sexual concerns and delights much the way they would

talk about any other part of their lives.

Camper: *I was raped when I was a teenager. Since then, I have had relationships only with women. I felt safer at camp than I had ever felt before, so I asked a man to help me be sexual with men again; he agreed to proceed slowly and gently, with time to feel all my feelings and to stop completely if I said so. Afterwards, I shared this with the women's circle, who celebrated with me in reclaiming this long-lost area of my sexual power.*

Presenters and Workshops—Learning Together

Each year, camp has presenters on topics meant to educate or inspire the community. Campers aren't expected to agree with the presenters; they take what works for them, and leave the rest—or challenge the presenter. When things go “wrong,” we get to practice what we are learning at our workshops. People at our events are encouraged to use upsets and painful reactions as gateways to personal growth and deeper intimacy.

Sarah: *During a playful exercise, pretending to be animals on all fours, a man nipped my heel. In a panic, I slapped his back and yelled “Don't do that!” He apologized immediately. The workshop leader asked us to share what happened; but in the process, he told me that slapping the man's back was a violent act, and asked me to apologize. I refused. There was intense reaction among the group; some felt that violence is never appropriate, and others were horrified that a woman was being told that she was wrong to counter a physical assault. The leader continued to loudly defend his position. People gathered in informal small groups to provide support for each other, and to explore what had happened.*

The next morning, after talking with many campers, the workshop leader told me that he had learned a lot from all the ensuing discussion, and apologized. He then went before the whole group, and shared his own process and new understandings; that he had reacted from his own triggers around violence, and especially being in the position of the workshop leader, had unfairly used his position of authority in front of the group. The leader and I wound up with a warmer and deeper connection, sensing a mutual commitment to communicating from the heart.

First-year camper: *The dialog that followed that event was the moment I knew this community was different. It was committed to dealing with things as they came to us and not sweeping things under the rug.*

Going Home—What Now?

Even after camp is over, many participants find that what they learned at camp carries over into their “real world” life. Some of the organizers have joked that the success of camp should be measured by the number of people who go home and quit their soul-destroying jobs.

Jade: *I came to Summer Camp East for the first time this year,*

mostly on a lark. My response to the experience was so intense that I took another two weeks off work to attend Summer Camp West—just to see if it was all real. When I returned, I walked into my manager's office and told her that I cannot continue to spend 45 hours a week in a building where windows do not open. I related my Summer Camp experience and thoughts in detail and she told me to consider the path of a healer or a teacher. Since then, my company has agreed to make my job part-time and telecommute, and I have moved to a New Culture intentional community 250 miles away.

Several land-based intentional communities have been inspired by the Summer Camp experience, including Heart-On Farm in Oregon, La'akea in Hawaii, and Chrysalis in Virginia.

Melanie: *The communication skills and life attitudes I learned at camp have increased my ability to connect with my family and friends at home in an honest, loving manner. Inspired by what I found at camp, I moved to Oregon and co-created an ecovillage in Eugene using those principles and insights. Many former campers live in Eugene, and I've deepened those friendships as well. Even*

There was intense reaction among the group; some felt that violence is never appropriate, and others were horrified that a woman was being told that she was wrong to counter a physical assault.

though the romantic connections among these folks may come and go, the friendships mostly remain steady, creating a tribe of people who love and support each other.

Besides the tribe in Eugene, there are several others that have grown out of camp; people who connect with each other frequently, even dai-

ly, who consider themselves part of an intentional community, even though they don't share the same address.

The Authors: *We're excited to be part of an intimate community that explores personal growth, intimate relationships, sexuality, communication, community, social change, and global consciousness, all while trying to find practical ways to “bring it all home.” What we have learned is that personal growth is not enough; the change needed for human survival cannot happen piecemeal. Our new understandings can be most effectively implemented in the larger society by changing our culture, our customary ways of thinking and acting. The core insight of New Culture is that powerful change comes first to our daily lives. ❀*

Pati Diehl has been active in NFNC since its beginning in 1995, and served as co-organizer of NFNC Summer Camp West (2000-2004). Melanie Rios is a long-time resident of Maitreya Ecovillage in Eugene, Oregon. Michael Rios co-organized NFNC Summer Camp East (2004-2008) and NFNC Summer Camp West (2004) and co-founded Chrysalis Community in Arlington, Virginia (www.chrysalis-va.org). Sarah Taub co-organized NFNC Summer Camp East (2004-2008) and co-founded Chrysalis Community. For more information on Network for a New Culture, visit www.nfnc.org.





Sandhill Sorghum Festival

By Stan Hildebrand

The photos are from Sandhill Farm's fourth annual Sorghum Festival on September 27, 2008, which is a combination of a traditional harvest festival and an open house. We had about 75 folks attending the Saturday afternoon affair, held on our 135-acre farm outside Rutledge, Missouri. Activities included garden and greenhouse tours, apple cider pressing (giving away all the samples), and a hay wagon ride to some of our fields, where Apple, the tour leader, talked about our crop rotations and demonstrated how we harvest the sorghum (see our website, www.sandhill.org, for more details). We also did some processing: pressing the juice out of the stalks, cooking it down into a syrup (old timers call it molasses), and bottling it (for sale). A traditional favorite—hot sorghum on fresh biscuits—was available for sampling. The festival took place toward the beginning of our approximately four-week-long sorghum harvest.

The festival was the culmination of considerable evolution. Sorghum was the first community business at Sandhill Farm, an intentional community of eight members. Our paradigm included supporting ourselves by growing agricultural crops. We began making sorghum in 1977, three years after the community was established. For the first 10 years or so, we harvested and processed the crop by ourselves with the help of occasional visitors and friends. Gradually we began to invite family, friends, fellow communards, etc. to come and help us with the sorghum harvest (late September).

It worked! Folks came to help and loved it! It snowballed: more and more people came, and they told their friends, who told their friends. Several years later, people began calling as early as the winter—asking if they could come for the “sorghum festival”? (Festival??? We're thinking: this ain't no fun and frolic affair—it's hard manual labor.) Gradually we realized that it's a matter of perception: it may seem like a lot of work to us, but if visitors think of it as a celebration, why not? And the more that show up to help, the more it actually is fun. The harvest also goes more smoothly and efficiently.

The next step was to make it an official festival where we demonstrate harvesting and processing sorghum. We expanded it to an open house to celebrate a traditional harvest and to showcase the gardens. We always have folks from other communities here at the time, so it is a general sharing of the community lifestyle. Of course, we do not expect the guests to do any of the work, although we hope that they will buy some of our products. However, the theme is not marketing; it's celebrating the bounty of the earth and sharing our lifestyle and our continuing experiments with growing, eating, and preserving our food. Demonstrating wholesome food and lifestyle—now, let's celebrate it!

For 15 years or so, we have had enough folks to help with the harvest. Lately, in fact, we have turned some away because we feel we can't adequately handle more than 15 or so extra people at a time. When I tell other farmers about this “problem,” they shake their heads wonderingly. Everywhere else, labor on the farm—especial-



All photos courtesy of Stan Hildebrand

ly manual labor—is in short supply. So why are we blessed with this abundance?

Several factors come to mind. We are a group, an intentional community, so when we do a communal project, there are at least a handful of us already, and with interns and visitors, we have a group energy going. It's more inviting for new folks to join a group endeavor than to begin by working by themselves, doing a project for a small family farm. Further, we seem to be tapping into a primal need for humans to be involved in a harvest activity, to store up food for the long winter, as well as an urge for it to be a group activity, a community working together to take care of itself.

All of these come together in our annual sorghum harvest. We are the hosts and the catalyst: we make it happen at our place. What a transformation: instead of a six-week-long season that felt like drudgery toward the end, we now have a four-week-long harvest where we enjoy working with friends. Further, we feel blessed to be able to extend ourselves to celebrate the harvest with an open house and festival. ❀

Stan Hildebrand grew up on a farm in a Mennonite community in Manitoba, Canada, entered academia, exited it just shy of receiving a PhD in African History, discovered radical politics and community living, and decided to walk his talk—which led him to join Sandhill Farm in 1980. Since then he has been in charge of the farming at Sandhill, and in recent years has also become

an organic certification inspector for organic farms and businesses. Sandhill is organized around a dual focus: (a) to farm and live ecologically and sustainably and (b) to live communally, sharing work and income, striving for equality, and fostering principles of cooperation and living in harmony with each other and the earth. See www.sandhill.org.

Opposite page: Hayride is taking festival guests to see the sorghum fields. This page top left: Pressing apple cider in our orchard. This page bottom left: Gigi (Sandhill garden manager, far left) giving tour of greenhouse; the three raised beds are in use but we are still finishing construction to ready it for the winter. This page top right: Closeup of press with Arjen (friend from the Netherlands visiting for sorghum season); Renay (Sandhill member) at press; Cynder and Torin (kids from Dancing Rabbit) looking on. This page middle: After the public part of the day, friends gather for a contradance in the orchard. This page bottom left: Stan (Sandhill farm manager) pointing to where steam comes into the building (Sugar Shack) to heat the sorghum pans. Finished product flowing into square pan. All photos were taken at the Sandhill Sorghum Festival, September 2008.

Celebration, as a Way of Life



By Barbara Swetina



“Everybody needs beauty like bread.” —John Muir
Easter Sunday in Eourres, and a sleepy little village in Provence wakes. But something is afoot! The night before, bands of marauding musicians and minstrels were seen moving through town, furtively putting up posters in the dark. “Villageois, tenez-vous prêts!” (“Villagers, be ready!”) was all the posters said. Ready for what, one wonders?

Word had gone 'round that there was to be a special celebration, similar to events that took place in the same village 20 or so years before....

Then, in the early '80s, a group of young hippies had just moved to Eourres, a remote mountain village in southern France, where only a handful of old people from the local population still remained. The young people were living close to the earth, picking wild lavender, keeping goats, making cheese, and rebuilding fallen stone houses. Beautiful gardens appeared, and long-abandoned irrigation systems were rebuilt and put to use again.

In those days, the village baker, François, allowed his imagination to roam during the long silent hours of the early morning, when he waited for the dough to rise and all the village was asleep. Drawing on inspirations from Buddhist New Year celebrations, German Carnivals, American Indian full moon rituals, as well as contemporary theatre like “Bread and Puppet,” he was dreaming of seeing the whole village engaged in celebrating the change of seasons with imagination and fantasy, using all the resources that were there. These dreams then took



All photos by Daria Sommer

*Villagers and guests engaged in celebration of the change of seasons.
Eourres, France.*

form, with incredible celebrations that linked the villagers to the nature they lived in—mountains, forests, and rivers—in a different way than happened when they worked outdoors.

In those celebrations all the surroundings were enhanced in their natural beauty, as if the presence of people with bright costumes, musical instruments, dance, song, and theatrical moments brought a special energy into the land, helping to renew the life force in nature.

I was part of one of those celebrations. Going back to some of the places of our celebration the next day, I noticed that the whole area had a special glow, as if all living things, the trees, stones, and rivers were still filled with the joy and beauty they had witnessed the day before.

Twenty years on, François Monnet, the initiator of those early celebrations, has come back, and the villagers are gathering, curious.

And now we hear the musicians, playing and gesturing for the village to follow. A masked figure approaches, in bright colors. With only gestures she “talks” with the people, encouraging them along the way. More colorful characters appear along the road, some with musical offerings, some with riddles, some sharing glasses of wine and Easter eggs. A huge sun puppet appears on the hill, offering blessings.

In a wide clearing in the middle of the woods, two sleeping figures reveal themselves as the King and Queen of Winter. Adorned with the staff of the seasons and the water from the beginning of time, they talk of how they have been guiding the plants, animals, and people through the winter and are now ready to pass on the vestiges of power to the Prince and Princess of Spring. Two beautiful young people appear, dressed in brilliant vibrant colors. The bride is indeed pregnant and as she receives seeds from the Queen of Winter, she vows to share them with the land and with the animals and people!

Animal figures join into the play and the Prince of Spring leads the whole congregation to a merry improvised dance. Then there is a picnic where all share food, drink, and laughter.

While all this is going on, dark clouds have gathered all around the horizon. But nature has made it a priority to keep the clearing immersed in sunshine, and exactly as the celebration comes to a close, the first drops fall!

“In celebration we weave together the human, the natural and the

invisible world into a fabric of beauty. When we reach out beyond ourselves, to express our link with the natural world—with plants, seasons, elements, planets—we are feeling and feeding part of ourselves, we are re-connecting with the cosmos.” —François Monnet

We, the group who put together this celebration, call ourselves Celebration Activists. Forming a group of artists from many countries and from backgrounds in theatre, music, dance, fine arts, costume design, and more, we have been leading and animating creative projects, from family celebrations to large pan-European gatherings. Working with hundreds of people over the years, we were struck that there really is a need in our society to retrieve the magic road to celebration.

Therefore, for a few years we have been examining the possibility of a School or University of Celebration that would demonstrate, research, and apply the art of celebration.

Here we don’t look at celebration as mere entertainment, a luxury, but as a necessity for the balance of humanity, the happiness of human beings. Just as we can teach mathematics or agriculture, or study psychotherapy, we can teach and study celebration. Celebration is an art, a craft that can be learnt. There are tools, secrets, and expertise to be passed on.

In 2009 we will form the Traveling School/University of Celebration (soon to be found on our website, www.celebrationactivists.org).

In this project, a team of musicians and teachers of theatre, fine arts, song, and dance will go from town to town, creating impromptu celebrations and trans-cultural rituals in the hearts of towns and cities. Our tour will culminate with the summer solstice celebration in the Findhorn Foundation Community in northern Scotland, June 13-21st. This year we welcome special guests from Poland, Jacek and Alicia Halas, who will bring a deep knowledge of Slavic and eastern European traditions in song, music, dance, ritual, and folk art. Findhorn, a multi-cultural spiritual community, ecovillage, and educational center dedicated to a holistic lifestyle and attracting visitors worldwide, is known for its pioneering work connecting with the intelligence in Nature.

If “Celebrations as a Way of Life” speaks to you, come and join us! ❀

Barbara Swetina, born in Austria, has lived in the Findhorn Foundation Community in Scotland for more than 20 years. She is also a world traveler, offering singing and dance workshops internationally in places like Europe, USA, Russia, Australia, and Japan. She plays the piano, flute, harp, and accordion, and has created several CDs and song books. With Ian Turnbull from the Findhorn Foundation and François Monnet, a multi-talented artist and fellow workshop leader, she is developing a vision for a university/school of celebration. www.sacredsongs.net, www.celebrationactivists.org, www.findhorn.org.



Festival of the Babas

By Allan Sutherland

The village of Hotnitsa is situated in central Bulgaria about 15 kilometres from the old capital, Veliko Tarnovo. It lies in a vale within the plain formed by the River Danube and is approximately 70 kilometres from the border with Romania. Five hundred people live in the village, a relatively thriving community which supports three shops, two cafés, and a post office. Its village hall hosts many celebrations and concerts throughout the year. In recent years, approximately 25 British families have made their homes in Hotnitsa, creating a new and interesting dynamic. A large number of elderly people live in the village and a pensioners' club meets three times a week. The most active members of this club appear to be the heroines of this piece: the babas!

Bulgarian babas (grandmothers) have an almost mythical status in Bulgaria. They appear to possess mystical powers with their knowledge of herbs, poultices, and other natural remedies for sickness. Historically, they acted as unofficial midwives for many births in their villages and, as such, enjoy a special day of celebration in January known as "Babenden" (Grandma's Day). Babenden can be enjoyed and interpreted in many different ways. This article is an attempt to see one village's celebration through the eyes of a British interloper applying some of the Carnavalesque theories of Mikhail Bakhtin (Russian philosopher and literary critic, b.1895 d.1975).

Despite their importance in the daily life and history of a Bulgarian village, babas have no official power or voice. Official hegemony is reserved for the men or younger women of the village. The Babenden festival inverts all of this for one day only, giving grandmothers the chance to "rule" the village. Such behaviour is what Bakhtin referred to as "carnival inversions, the world-turned-upside-down" (*Rabelais and His World*). The day begins with a mock wedding ceremony between a male bride and a female groom, who are dressed accordingly. Tradition dictates that the groom should be played by the youngest grandmother in the village, assuming she is willing and able.

All the babas are dressed in bright, colourful traditional costumes and, following the wedding ceremony, they lead a procession around the village. They stop cars and playfully demand money from men, which they pin to a flag topped by an onion and birds' feathers, perhaps symbolising natural life forces. If the men refuse to pay up, they run the risk of having their

trousers removed, since men must either pay this forfeit or be dressed as women for this day. It's noticeable that few Bulgarian men appear for this celebration; they apparently know that this day is primarily for women.

One baba is transported around the village in an ancient wheelbarrow, pushed by one of the stronger young men dressed as a woman. This particular individual entered into the spirit of the day by adopting an enormous pair of false breasts. According to Bakhtin, dressing up in carnival "celebrates the body... in a wild, exaggerated and grotesque way" (Simon Dentith, *Bakhtinian Thought*). During this procession, the babas break into traditional but spontaneous dance at times. This high-spirited dancing is far from their "normal" behaviour (such as walking to the shops or post office), demonstrating how energised they are by this celebration.

At some point in the proceedings, a mock birth takes place, in which one of the younger women of the village pretends to give birth to a doll, assisted by some babas. This re-enactment reminds all concerned of the babas' traditional role as midwives, which had been an essential part of village life for many centuries. Without them, new life would not have come into the village. This role was of particular importance during the 500 years of Ottoman oppression because the designated Turkish authorities were not trusted by women. By engaging a baba as her midwife, the mother-to-be was defying the state control over her maternal powers. In the rest of her life, she may have been "under the yoke," but at the moment of giving birth, she was free and in the care of an unofficial and unauthorised baba. She was more willing to entrust the life of her self and baby to the care of a baba than to the state, which represented repression, containment, and control. This was one of the rare moments in which she could be free and true to herself, as the baba colluded with her in achieving a full expression of giving birth.

As well as the anti-authoritarianism of the babas' role as midwives, it's possible to see a strongly subversive element running through the ceremony itself. To gain a clear view of this, it's worth considering the background to Bakhtin's writing in more detail. He was writing in Russia during the Stalinist regime and much of his writing—like that of his fellow intellectuals—was suppressed and repressed. Many of Bakhtin's friends and colleagues were imprisoned in labour camps and he was exiled for



All photos courtesy of Allan Sutherland



Bulgarian and British people from Hotnitsa village at two different Babenden celebrations, one in 2007 and one in 2008.



much of his life to some of the remotest parts of the USSR. Bakhtin's most famous work of literary criticism, *Rabelais and His World*, was written during this period of exile, and some commentators have suggested that Bakhtin's admiration of the Carnavalesque in Rabelais' writing—especially the interpretation of carnival as a form of protest—gave him the chance to criticise Stalin. "The book is to be read as a hidden polemic against the regime's cultural politics" (Dentith).

The Babenden celebrations end at the village hall where the musicians continue to play traditional tunes, to which the women dance the traditional horo. The babas take great pride in providing the refreshments themselves, so there is a tremendous choice of homemade food, wine, and rakiya. In contrast with many other celebrations in the village hall, the mayor plays no part in the proceedings. His absence does, in fact, help to reinforce the unofficial and temporary nature of the celebration. This day will end and, by the following morning, normal service will have resumed. The mayor will be in power, the

babas will have returned to their ordinary clothes, there will be no dancing in the streets, and subversive fun will have to wait until next year. Because of the briefness of carnival (and of Babenden) some critics claim that such festivities can, ironically, help to reinforce a status quo: "Bakhtin's view of carnival as an anti-authoritarian force that can be mobilised against the official culture...is best seen as a safety-valve, which reinforces the bonds of authority by allowing for their temporary suspension" (Dentith). ❀

Allan Sutherland lives in Bulgaria, in the village of Hotnitsa, which is close to Veliko Tarnovo in the centre of the country. He and his wife, Eileen, and daughter, Cassie, have renovated an old property and recently built a strawbale house in their front garden. (See www.hotnitsa.com.) He works part-time as a web developer and is involved in the arts within the local region. He is originally from the northeast of England and continues loyally to support Newcastle United, despite their current form!

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Rabelais and His World, Mikhail Bakhtin, translated by Helene Iswolsky, reprinted Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1984.
Bakhtinian Thought, Simon Dentith, Routledge, London, 1995.



All photos courtesy of Guðmundur Ármann Pétursson



Cultural Summer in Sólheimar, Iceland

By Guðmundur Ármann Pétursson

Sólheimar is an ecovillage in Iceland with 100 inhabitants. This community was founded in 1930 to give shelter and support to individuals with disabilities. For decades it was a place that most Icelanders knew of, but few had visited. In recent years a lot of work has been done to open up the ecovillage to the wider community, including Icelanders and visitors from abroad.

Many things have been done to achieve this openness, including taking on new challenges—supporting those in need like prisoners, the long-term unemployed, and cancer patients. We have also opened a coffee shop, a general store where we sell food and crafts, a tree nursery, and more. All of those things have been helpful and made a positive difference in the development of Sólheimar's community.

In 2005 we decided to offer a cultural summer—a program of art exhibitions, concerts, an organic day, guided tours, and a market. We wanted to create a space where we could exhibit our work for ourselves and others to enjoy. We wanted to listen to live music in our church performed by community members, and have other artists come and offer music to the community, but we did not want to be

alone—we wanted the wider community to enjoy it with us. We wanted to raise awareness about organic agriculture and sell our organic vegetables and trees. We wanted to offer guided tours through our sculpture garden and our forest rehabilitation department (tree nursery). We wanted to enjoy, learn, and include others too as part of our larger community.

The cultural summer has been a huge success. We have had 12 concerts in 12 weeks, mostly by artists living outside the community, offering jazz, blues, classical, and pop music. We have had many exhibitions where community members show their paintings, poems, wax-sculptures, ceramics, artwork from felt, and more.

The cultural summer has proven to be a great way to make new friends. It is also an added source of income and a way to show how life is in an ecovillage. Most importantly, the cultural summer is a way for the community to integrate. Sólheimar is based around support towards people with disabilities, unemployed people, prisoners, etc. The community's support of those individuals is its main priority. Just as its people are different, Sólheimar is different. To address these differences Sólheimar acts under the philosophy of “reverse integration.”

Reverse integration means that being different is normal—maintaining a community where each member can show his/her strength and is looked at for what he/she is, not for what he/she may lack. Sólheimar is a community where each person is allowed to be secure and strong within himself/herself.

Through the cultural summer, we integrate 25,000 “normal” people (coming from outside Sólheimar) into our community—instead of only asking our residents to try to integrate into the wider community, where they are a minority group and therefore often not so welcome, secure, and happy. The cultural summer is building bridges between groups of people, and it's great fun! ❁



Guðmundur Ármann Pétursson has a degree in Business, MSc in Environmental Studies, and is a student of Anthroposophy. He is the director of Sólheimar.

Top left: Children playing around the Sólheimar sign. Top right: Haukur and Birna at an exhibition from the wood workshop. Bottom right: Sólheimar's choir.

Festivals: Times of High Energy

By Barbara Stützel



All photos by Norbert Achtelik

Our community was born out of the spirit of learning and growing together. We share a deep longing for a life without violence, and we know that we need to be the change we want to see in the world. Our aim is to learn how we can create a nonviolent way of life where trust and confidence grow. In this process, self-responsibility is as important as supporting others. Festivals are the moments in the year when we share our processes and results with our guests.

ZEGG is a community with 80 people southwest of Berlin, Germany. The people who bought this place in 1991 had already lived together in other projects in the Black Forest. They had always held large meetings with guests, and the dream of having a place where 300 or more people could easily spend time together led them to choose this area. A key element in site selection was the idea of ZEGG being a seminar center and meeting point, and this still impacts much of our community life. Every weekend we have two or three seminars on the site, and five times a year we hold a festival. Each festival has its own topic.

At the Easter Trance Event, one of the main goals is to dance the whole night through without drugs but accompanied by 30 live drums and techno music. Small groups and sweat lodges accompany the process. The intent is to die and resurrect in a modern way—a ritual of initiation into spring.

On Whitsun we hold a five-day festival of arts and politics. Here we want to evoke creative energy through artistic workshops (theatre, music, dance, painting), and also to reflect how we want to

bring this energy into the world. We want not only to express our own creative life forces, but also to use them for changing society and the planet.

Summertime is the highlight of the year. It is 11 days long and incorporates all the ideas that form our community—love and sexuality, spirituality, ecology, politics, and community life.

In autumn there is a new gathering dedicated to the issues of love and sexuality.

The New Year festival is a ritual where personal evaluation takes place. We also do sweat lodges, use methods from the ZEGG Forum (a listening circle that supports personal exploration and communication), and look for affirmations in our lives.

In all festivals there is opportunity for deeper personal experience in small groups and talks, as well as in larger gatherings within the festival community. The aim is to teach by providing new experiences, and to create opportunities for us all to learn together. As the Whitsun festival and the Summertime are the biggest festivals, there is always English translation and a children's camp.

The festivals are created by all the community members. The work is not paid, but it is the members' contribution to the economy of the place. The duties are very different, and only together can we create the spirit of community. This is the same as in daily life, but festivals are defined periods of time where we can get out of daily life customs and consciously create new experiences.

The best festival is one in which everyone chooses the place and the duty where she is connected to her inner fire. During

(continued on p. 74)



How Currents Community Got Its Groove Back

By Rebecca Dale

Currents Community in southeastern Ohio was born in celebration. Our founding members coalesced out of a larger group of community seekers that formed within bi-monthly FORC (Federation of Ohio River Cooperatives) meetings. Those meetings spanned entire weekends and developed a celebratory aspect beyond the business sessions. Many people began wondering aloud if it were possible “to live this way all the time,” working, sharing skills, and playing together in a more authentic closeness than daily life usually offered.

The group that founded Currents eventually bought rural land. In 1981, seven adults and two toddlers moved into a 19th-century farmhouse on the property. The very closeness of their living quarters in the Old House made it both possible and necessary to share their lives in the more genuine way they were hoping for, including both planned and spontaneous celebrations for just about everything. Then as the community started to grow, many began building their own separate homes on the property. As Marty Zinn reflects on that time, “We knew when we began building the houses that things would change.”

A quiet period followed as members settled into their homes, raised families, and went into town for jobs. Few visitors came besides personal friends and families, and community celebrations seldom went beyond birthday parties and occasional holiday gatherings.

Then in 1998, Marty and her partner Pete Hill spent four months traveling in Hawaii and Micronesia, where Pete had once lived and worked and still had family members. It was Marty’s first experience in an island culture and she was totally enchanted. She loved the language, the music, and the ever-present sea, and wanted to share the feel of the trip with everyone. They had attended a fancy tourist *luau* in Hawaii, and though it wasn’t a genuine island community *luau* (Pete had experienced such *luaus* living on the island of Pohnpei in Micronesia), they decided that a *luau* would be just the right way to share the island culture with their community in Ohio. Later that summer, with the help of their community-mates, they or-

ganized a *luau* for Currents, and for our wider circle of friends, families, and neighbors.

The previous year had been one of great loss. A beloved community member died, and other members also lost loved ones. It was a good time to open up and celebrate life again.

An old hay wagon was dragged down to one of the few open and level sites on our hill-country land to hold the food, and a pit dug to make an in-ground, earthen oven (called an *imu* in the Hawaiian manner, although Pete calls it an *oom*, the word used on several islands in Micronesia) for roasting a pig, yams, and sweet corn. Members and guests were invited to dress “*aloha* style,” and bring tropical fruits and salads. Hawaiian-style music played, and videos of Hawaii ran throughout the evening in the houses bordering the party site.

Over the next decade, the party just got bigger and better with guests (some traveling from other states) numbering over 200 in recent years. It developed such a local flavor that some call it our Appalachian *Luau*. Potluck dishes celebrate summer gardens. Pete makes his special “pond water,” from lemonade and puréed mint leaves that grow abundantly here. This favorite Currents beverage looks like muddy water with algae in it; those who aren’t in on the joke often won’t drink it until the recipe is revealed. The sweet corn is local, and the pig is one that has pastured all summer on a neighbor’s hillside. The heavy paving bricks in the bottom of the pit that hold the heat after the local firewood is burned off were made years ago of local clay in the brick factories that once thrived here. The green leaves for insulating the top of the pit are not traditional Hawaii *ti* leaves, nor the taro and breadfruit leaves of Micronesia, but wild Ohio grapevines and cattails from the pond.

In time, both the pig itself and the way the *imu* was covered with old carpets while it cooked generated controversy. We solved the (toxic) carpet issue by reverting to the island method of using pieces of old corrugated roofing to cover the greens, and sealing the heat in the pit with loose earth and a mound of hay. But despite passionate protests from a few local vegetarians,



From left: No tropical greenery in Ohio, so the crew cuts cattails to cover hot bricks in the imu. Everybody is pitching in to fill the imu with fresh-cut cattails and grapevines; preparation is part of the fun. Marty Zinn and Pete Hill dressed island style for our first community luau. An island song with a country accent, music that bridges cultures and generations. Sharing festive food in festive garb. As the sun goes down, friends and neighbors gather for a luau feast.

pork remains on the menu. Some Currents members, including myself, are also vegetarians. Personally, I dislike seeing the pig being prepared and cooked, but feel that the ritual of communal food preparation is the more important reason for this celebration. In fact, our luau has grown into a three-day festival of work, fun, and skill sharing as friends and neighbors of all ages come to help prepare the pig, gather greens, start the fire in the wee hours of the morning, fill and seal the imu, and clean up the morning after the big party.

Our entertainment is hybrid also. There is horseshoe throwing, but also atlatl spear throwing. People swim in the pond and play volleyball, then gather 'round when Pete blows the Triton shell, calling folks to help open the imu. Hawaiian music plays throughout the feast, but as darkness falls, someone builds a campfire, kids roast marshmallows and light sparklers, and there are fireworks on the hill. Drums, guitars, and flutes appear, and the sounds and rhythms of many lands last far into the night.

After 10 years, Marty and Pete felt they no longer wanted the main responsibility for organizing our luau, but it seemed too important to give up because it brings together so many disparate people. It's a common ground where conservative farmers enjoy good food and fun side by side with "old hippies," college students, kids of all ages, and activists of all kinds. Another community member, Roger Wilkens, agreed to honcho this event and keep it going.

This opening up to a larger sense of community has spun off other forms of celebration. Several years after the luaus began, Lisa Trocchia-Balkits and Ivars Balkits were living in the Old House and hosted regular "First Friday" potlucks and drum circles there (or at our pond shelter in good weather). This monthly event drew many area people who loved to play drums and music, and seemed to be longing for a greater sense of community. One evening found "82 souls" celebrating life, food, and music in the Old House, according to Lisa.

When Lisa and Ivars moved from Currents, First Fridays seemed too important to end, so with their permission, we continue the tradition. I post email reminders and make sure the space is prepared, but our First Fridays seem to have self-organized into a life of their own. While usually the scene for some

pretty wild drumming, occasionally they are a venue for people to share other talents and creativity. Sometimes they are more introspective, with gentle drumming and good talk under an Appalachian moon. Indeed, there is a growing sense of community that goes beyond our own membership. Recently I heard someone say they didn't know for sure who were members here and who weren't, but it didn't matter; something bigger was going on.

But something "smaller" is happening, too. A young woman who lived with us for a while, Guinevere, wanted a greater sense of being in a community "family," so a few years ago, she started inviting us to Sunday evening potlucks. We loved it, but soon it became apparent that we needed better communication concerning where and when these dinners would actually happen. Marty and I, as designated social organizers, began organizing them also, but Guinevere had hoped that these evenings could be more spontaneous. I started to wonder whether I was becoming too rigid and over-organized—yet without some structure, nothing much seemed to happen.

Then I realized that our luaus, First Fridays, and other celebrations tend to spontaneously self-organize as long as the details of careful preparation either fade into the background, or become part of the fun itself. It's the magic of creating a "framework," as Roger puts it, "in which spontaneity can happen." Our Sunday evening family time, now spontaneously self-organizing as well, is very special to us, a time to turn inward just as we have learned to turn outward to our larger community—a time for us to tell our stories and dream our dreams together.

Marty and Pete brought us out of our quiet period through our luaus, then the rest of us discovered the power of celebrating together in both large and small ways. Now, "living this way all the time"—bringing that spirit of celebration to even the most mundane or difficult parts of our life together—seems natural to us, as we'd always hoped it would be. ❀

Rebecca Dale is a late-blooming communitarian who joined Currents after retiring as a librarian in northeast Ohio. She does occasional freelance writing, and recently earned credentials in Earth Literacy and permaculture. She was once a farmer and still has dirt under her fingernails.



All photos courtesy of Paul Freundlich

The Dance of Expansive Community

By Paul Freundlich

In the mid-'70s, I was a participant and advisor to a New Age conference center in southern New Hampshire, Another Place Farm. There were gifted leaders, staff, and thousands of folks who flowed through the weekends, exposed to workshops and play that blew synapses as surely as the sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll that permeated the culture.

For the weekends we shared, it was a rollicking community of exploration and change. How it connected with the "real world" that folks returned to seemed largely irrelevant, since there was always another weekend ahead.

During those years, I was an editor of *COMMUNITIES*, and traveled enough to experience similar phenomena at the Rainbow Gatherings and the Oregon Country Fair, as well as regularly attending more results-oriented meetings such as the Consumer Co-op Alliance, New School for Democratic Management, and Association for Humanistic Psychology. At these more focused events, we reveled in the experience of community, and counted on the normalcy of next year's gathering.

The play between intentional community living and the more episodic communities we created fascinated me then and now.

Then, I was part of a geographically-based, alternative community in New Haven, Connecticut—not only living communally, but reinforced by a matrix of daily connections: physical relationships, love, and gossip. We cut cheese together at the food co-op, shared parental shifts at the childcare co-op and school, joined together in house meetings, politics, parties, finances. We bridged the personal and the collective, arguing ideology sometimes beyond any sense or reason.

For a decade, that community was real for a few hundred to a few thousand urban and rural folks. It was the product of both chance and intention. It was present and then it was substantially over, marked by the collapse of critical institutions. Many

folks picked up their marbles of education and class, and moved on. Others stayed put and accepted a less vital set of connections. Still others found other causes, other communities. Yet I don't believe its passing made the time of its elegance less real.

Now, my local experience may contain rich personal relationships and social connections, but I've also substantially moved on. Most of my focus is on communities forged through mutual commitment to issues of social and environmental responsibility. We gather periodically in conferences and meetings, sharing intense thought and expertise, mixing in play and personal updates, counting on our continuity of intention, knowing that we have done it before and will do it again.

Between physical gatherings, there is conversation by email, listservs, chat groups, conference calls, and video conferencing, supplanting the clumsier methods we relied on when the world was less technically apt. For many of us, the networks of work and relationships that develop from these regular meetings become more vital and engrossing than what goes on in localities or profession.

The bridge for me between these two modes of community revolves around dance: Dance New England is episodic, but also rooted in physical connection and extended communing.

It began in 1980, when I put out a call to a variety of cooperative dances in New England. Communities were already gathered around Dance Friday and Dance Free in the Boston area, and Dance Spree in Northampton. We had our Dance Haven, and a dance group was beginning in Manhattan.

For a week that summer at Another Place, a few dozen folks danced together, prepared meals cooperatively, shared chores, took classes with the teachers of Contact Improv and T'ai Chi I had hired. Halfway through a week that exceeded our wildest dreams, we sat down and evolved the beginnings of a collaborative

structure including local weekends, governance, vision, and deepened relationships with a full complement of households, marriages, kids, and separations.

A few years ago, we celebrated a 25th anniversary for the 600 or so who come together each summer for a week or two; an annual select from the thousands who have attended over the years and are on our mailing list. At camp we have a sophisticated childcare program, quality food, brilliant classes, amazing events, live and DJ'd music, incredible talent. Throughout the year, members have frequent exchanges and communications through several community listservs, local weekends, and ad hoc socializing.

Issues of class, race, and gender are reflected in our mix, confronted when necessary (some of the same divides and imbalances that affect the larger culture can affect us as well). Perhaps the most remarkable accomplishment of our community is that a generation of kids has grown up to see Dance New England as an important part of their lives, and has even taken leadership.

The line between summer camp and an ongoing, year-round community is blurred by the strength of the most lively local dances. Dance New England may be one of the more successful examples of a federal approach, where there is mutual advantage to the local and transcendent structures. Despite a budget of about \$200,000 for summer camp (rental space, food, teachers, etc.), we don't have permanent staff except for a year-round bookkeeper. There's even a West Coast off-shoot, Northern California Dance Collective, with frequent cross-fertilization.

Recently, we almost pulled off a \$2.7 million purchase of the lovely Maine site where we've summered for 18 of our almost 30 years, raising the money via loans and private investments from our more affluent, committed, and secure members. With the new owners who outbid us firmly in control, and lacking cultural sympathy, we're moving the summer of 2009 to a new site, and putting our homesteading initiatives on hold. Given the state of the economy and real estate ownership, our transient community

may be better off enjoying the fruits of non-attachment.

The Contact Dance community has a similar trajectory for its gatherings, where the physical intensity of dance is a powerful complement to more ethereal or prosaic connections. Earthdance, in Western Massachusetts, is a staffed facility that serves and nurtures both Contact and Dance New England, and has its own living community grown up around it.

Music, dance, professions, modes of life—all have the capacity to inspire community. Do these experiences meet some theoretical or practical standard of dependability and consistency? In the deepest spiritual and historical sense, I'm not sure it matters.

No aspect of this expansive community-making is completely new, except perhaps the speed and reach of recent communications and travel. Even in prehistory, regional markets were the places where celebrations attended inter-tribal marriages and crossing of cultures. The vendors and peddlers, their goods spread on mats, traded stories. As they traveled between markets, they formed extended networks of community. Is that so different from organizations like Sierra Club and Earth Charter, with chapters that serve as nuclei around which communities gather?

Stretched between the global and the local, I count us as fortunate to have such a range of options. ❁

Paul Freundlich was an editor and publisher of COMMUNITIES from the mid-'70s to mid-'80s, founded Co-op (Green) America and served as Executive Director for its first decade, and, almost 30 years ago, started Dance New England, which remains his primary community. He is on the Board of the CERES Coalition and is Chair of the Stakeholder Council of the Global Reporting Initiative, working for a just and sustainable world. His novel Deus ex Machina (2005) uses time travel as a device to explore one of the more entertaining ways to save the planet.

Related Back Issues:

THEME: Festivals and Gatherings



Readers interested in delving further into our current Festivals and Gatherings theme may want to explore some of COMMUNITIES' back issue catalog. The issues below speak to this theme in various ways, as do others not listed here (see communities.ic.org/back_issues/ for a complete list of back issues and ordering information). You may also order back issues (\$5 apiece plus shipping) using the form on page 72.

#134 (Spring 2007)
**TEMPORARY COMMUNITY—
WHAT DO WE LEARN?**

#126 (Spring 2005)
THE ARTS IN COMMUNITY

#123 (Summer 2004)
A DAY IN THE LIFE

#108 (Fall 2000)
**LET'S GO! LEARNING
OPPORTUNITIES IN COMMUNITIES**

#107 (Summer 2000)
SONG, DANCE, & CELEBRATION

#93 (Winter 1996)
CELEBRATING ARTS & CREATIVITY

#83 (Summer 1994)
CELEBRATION OF COMMUNITY

#60 (October 1983)
GATHERINGS 1983



Chicken à la West Birch Avenue

We used to be a typical neighborhood. People were friendly enough and we waved to each other on our way into and out of our houses. We had the occasional chat on the sidewalk while shoveling snow or doing yard work. But that was where community ended on our block of West Birch Avenue in Flagstaff, Arizona. Our shady, tree-lined, historic downtown neighborhood mirrored countless neighborhoods across the United States: polite, but disconnected.

Knowing how valuable a connected neighborhood is, I had always wanted to create more meaningful neighborhood relationships than just small talk on the sidewalk. For one reason or another it never happened until one day when our neighborhood started a process that enabled us to connect in real ways. It began when my husband Pete and I consulted with a permaculture landscape company that was creating a design for our backyard. When they suggested we get chickens to eat our food scraps, make fertilizer, and provide eggs, I dismissed it immediately, thinking that chickens were far too ambitious for us as a single family with a five-year-old, a baby, and two cats. We had our plates full already.

I mentioned the landscape plan to our neighbor Jessie and suddenly a concept began to germinate: we could create a neighborhood chicken co-op! The idea had brilliant energy and momentum. The project gelled during a neighborhood potluck hosted at our house. We talked with more neighbors (Mark, who is also Pete's brother; his partner Jamie; Jessie's partner Brin; Sara; and Eric). We realized that we had five households of people on our block who were excited about the project. As we sat at our dining room table we discussed our collective ignorance about chickens, our fears about being able to care for them effectively, and our concerns that they would be noisy and smelly.

Despite these obstacles, Jessie decided to join because, in her words, "it was an opportunity to regain a relationship with the food we eat, and in the process a deeper connection to the natural world and our neighbors." Sara was dubious but decided to go along with it because we were proposing housing the chickens in her backyard and she didn't want to stand in the way of the project. For Pete and me, it was an opportunity to give our kids an experience that would highlight our values of sustainable local foods and community. By the end of the potluck, we were all committed.

It took shape quickly. One of the best things about the project was how each neighbor applied his or her unique skills. Jes-

sie was the only one of us who had any experience with chickens, so she volunteered to keep the tiny chicks in her kitchen for their first couple weeks of life. She spearheaded the task of checking the chicks' vents several times each day to ward off pasty butt and keep them healthy. Our daughter Gemma and Eric's daughter Ellie were enamored with the chicks and Jessie left her back door unlocked during the day so the kids could visit them.

Eric had a friend with chickens, so he kindly arranged for us to borrow supplies we would need, like a large tub to house the chicks as they grew. At this stage, the chicks moved to our garage, where Pete used an old door from our basement and some chicken wire to rig up a "roof" to the tub so the chicks would be safe from our cats. Everyone in the neighborhood had the code to open the garage so they could visit the chicks during the day. I loved seeing how effortlessly the boundaries of private space began to open as the neighbors united in this common endeavor.

Mark owns the duplex where Jessie, Brin, and Sara are tenants, and he suggested that we use the old horse barn behind the duplex house for a coop. Pete and Mark developed a design for the coop that would keep our chickens warm in winter, cool in summer, and safe from foxes, skunks, and raccoons. Again, Pete harvested old windows and building supplies from our basement to create the coop. We were all so excited when we located some paint that was being given away free by the city to paint the inside of the coop.

The chicks grew rapidly and Pete, Mark, Eric, and Brin worked diligently on the construction of the coop. When it was time to put netting over the chicken run to protect them from predators, Jamie and Sara helped watch our baby Angus while other neighbors put up the netting. Gemma helped construct and paint a hot pink ramp for the chickens to go in and out. Meanwhile, I hosted another neighborhood potluck so we could enjoy our success and "talk chickens." Eric organized a chicken rotation and each household now cares for the chickens a week at a time. Of course, if anyone ever needs someone to cover their shift, help is easy to find.

In this project, we have gained much more than fertilizer and eggs. We now have a shared commitment to these little beings that brings us together in satisfying ways. The chicken coop has become a sort of neighborhood commons where impromptu gatherings occur as neighbors stop by to drop off their kitchen



All photos by Sara Wagner



Top left: The chicks. Top middle: Pete and Brin working on the coop. Right: Gemma holding a chick. Bottom middle: The chick are starting to get feathers. Bottom left: Jesse adding the finishing touches.

scraps, give the birds fresh water, or brainstorm about how to fix a hole in the fence. It's a great conversation piece when friends and relatives come to visit; we have been able to meet more of each other's extended networks around the coop. The chickens also make us laugh as we watch them peck over old pieces of lettuce, moldy grapes, and pizza crusts.

Pete and Mark both put gates in their fences so we now have a corridor that runs across the back of three houses, linking us together. I like to see how this has increased our daughter's sense of freedom within the neighborhood. She is now free to run back and forth between the yards and I don't worry about her being alone in the front of the house by the street. Sometimes when Eric brings his daughter over (they live across the street) I'll find that the girls have struck up a spontaneous playtime that may focus around the chickens or extend into our house. It has also increased Gemma's ability to have independent relationships with the adults in our neighborhood. I'm glad that our children have this really cool project to do together and with other adults that enables them to feel freer in the world.

Taking care of these birds has created a shared sense of compassion and responsibility. Sara and I have both been surprised at how much we have come to like the chickens in the process of caring for them. One night, a ringtail cat got into the chickens' yard and frightened one bird literally to death. Several of us heard the "ladies" squawking at 5:00 in the morning and Mark came to their rescue. During that day, I noticed how we all shared concern for our birds' safety as we pieced together the details of what happened. Gemma took extra care with the chickens, visiting them often and making them "soup" of weeds and water that she hand-carried to them to help them recover from the scary event.

Another surprise along the way is how easy it was to create a miniature model of sustainable food production in an urban

area. Jessie says, "the chicken co-op has helped me to realize that it's not hard to build community or affect our food system. There isn't any special formula or checklist to follow. A simple potluck is all it takes to bring people together to make a positive change."

I love how this project is also teaching us and our children about the cycles of nature in a tangible way. Daily, we see our kitchen scraps devoured and transformed into poop for our gardens. We are just now starting to get an egg or two each day. For those of us who eat meat, we've had the opportunity to connect to that particular source of food in a real way.

In our neighborhood, we are allowed to have only hens and not roosters due to a city ordinance. So when we discovered that two of our original 16 chickens were roosters, we decided to slaughter and butcher them. This decision was something most of us felt squeamish about—a testament to how disconnected we are from the meat we eat. Most of us did not feel up to the task, but Pete and Eric volunteered and went through the process together from start to finish. Afterward, Pete and I cooked the roosters into broth and stew meat, which is in our freezer. The kids (who were not as squeamish as the adults) later saw pictures and heard the details of how it all happened, creating an important link for them in understanding where meat comes from, and seeing how their care and nurturing can contribute to the food we eat.

The next neighborhood potluck is due in a couple weeks, and we will be enjoying chicken soup à la West Birch Avenue, and perhaps a quiche or an omelet, homestyle. ❀



Hilary Giovale is a mother, writer, and belly-dance instructor in Flagstaff, Arizona. She holds a Master's degree in sustainability from Northern Arizona University.



A Virtual Retirement Village: Combining Independent Living with Community

In historic downtown Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where city dwellers commonly live in townhomes on compact, tree-lined streets, intentional community drifts through the air. Here, members of a “virtual retirement village” called The Lancaster Downtowners are nestled among the neighborhoods of the “Red Rose City” that reflect 1700s colonial architecture.

The key word in understanding the Downtowners is “virtual.” This group of about 100 retirement or near-retirement age people doesn’t fit the traditional shared-living model of intentional community. You won’t find a common room, permaculture how-to manual, or food co-op anywhere—and members generally are not next-door neighbors. Yet this village’s spirit, enthusiasm, and common interests were inspired by intentional community ideals.

The Downtowners, who first began to form in 2004, are bonded by three things: the transition from working life to retirement, a strong sense of independence, and an aversion to condo or assisted living. In practice, Downtowners is a member network that operates as a non-profit organization. It provides home management services, extensive opportunities for social interaction, education on life skills, provider networking, and liaison with special interest groups.

These are among the tangible benefits—either presently offered or in the works—but it is the intangibles that are priceless to some members, such as getting a lift to the grocery store from another member and together doing the week’s shopping.

It took a creative and persistent individual to herd individuals with diverse lifestyles, interests, and ideas about retirement into a virtual village. His name is Rod Houser, the Downtowners’ founder. Some 40 years ago, Houser was an inhabitant of a shared-living intentional community out in the hinterlands of Lancaster, Herrbrook Farm, which today is a spiritual retreat center. “It reached the point where all the care and attention of a rural intentional community was no longer practical. When

I started networking in Lancaster, I found lots of other people my age who wanted to stay connected with the city and not be resigned to eventually enter a ‘gated’ retirement center.”

In a curious use of the “Kevin Bacon rule”—in which somebody knows somebody who knows somebody until they find that any one person is connected with anyone in the world by no more than six people removed—kindred spirits found each other and coalesced surprisingly quickly. Numerous retirees and near-retirees—as well as some others as young as their mid-30s, far from retirement—are now in its fold, some of whom serve on its board of directors. As for Houser, he still lives at Herrbrook Farm, but plans to turn over daily management of the property to family members and join his city contemporaries. In the meantime, as a biking enthusiast, when the weather cooperates he bikes to and from the inner city.

Diverse Personalities

Downtowners is loaded with diverse personalities who have had fascinating life experiences. Bob Ibold is a 71-year-old former advertising agency executive now enjoying his hobby of collecting and selling ethnographic masks. “My wife, Regine, and I decided that we wanted to continue living in our townhouse on a quiet little street. It’s a lifestyle that suits us, and we enjoy the rich cultural life of downtown. Retirement communities tend to be homogenous with respect to age, income, and ethnicity. That’s not for us, at least right now.”

Mimi Shapiro, 62, an art instructor, believes that social changes across the United States have boosted the practicality of the virtual retirement village. “Cities like Cincinnati and Annapolis have really been at the forefront of the city renaissance movement, but small cities across America are becoming more and more livable,” she says. Shapiro is more than a little enthusiastic about her urban lifestyle. She likens Lancaster, with its city population of 55,000, to European cities, where peo-



Lancaster, Pennsylvania: the view from Holy Trinity Lutheran Church Spire.

ple commonly walk to where they need to go. Here, the city's downtown parks, farmers' market, and myriad shops are highly accessible on foot. "This morning, I walked to Central Market, which is open three days a week. I get to know the growers, the farmer, the butcher. One family makes Ethiopian foods. This is the heart of Amish country. If retirees can have it all and not have to leave our homes and neighborhoods, then that's great for us. We have the best of what city life has to offer."

For board member Ken Nissley, 65, and his wife, Elizabeth, it's about the true spirit of cooperative living. "I have some expectation that if the time comes when I need assistance, I might get some," says Ken. "While I'm still able to, I'm more than ready to go to the aid of others."

*"If retirees can have it all and
not have to leave our homes and
neighborhoods, then that's great for us.
We have the best of what city life
has to offer."*

Tea at the Macks'

One priority for members is feeding the social appetite. A six-week stretch from last October to December featured a menu of nine social events, including home gatherings for informal dinners and afternoon teas, dining in ethnic restaurants, and educational programs. One of the gatherings was a social tea on a Sunday afternoon at the home of Marcie and Jim Mack. Just as the common meal is a staple of intentional community living, food and drink are the centerpiece of most Downtowners social events, whether they be held in a member's house or a

downtown restaurant.

At the Macks' residence, a snug 1700s corner rowhouse, eight members, mostly from a part of town known as Musser Park, shot the breeze about everything from banking to baking, leaf raking to art appraising. In an ambience created by art motifs that vary from one room to the next, high ceilings with rich crown molding that lends an air of refinement, and the sound of Bach wafting along, they found out how much they have in common. For example, three who came talked about having lived in Lancaster only a few years

and finding Downtowners a great way to network socially, as others indicated they have done through their church. All in all, it was a great study of the invisible threads that form bonds in community.

The Business Side of a Virtual Village

The Downtowners' board has recognized that knowing its members' needs and interests goes hand-in-hand with success. For example, most Downtowners are computer literate and life-long learners. In fact, both attributes are increasingly vital to late-stage independent living. So over the last two years, Downtowners has been expanding its information-dissemination capabilities, posting a website, and sponsoring a listserv that lights up with frequent conversation. As for the educational programs,

members cannot get enough of them. For example, the representative of a local hospice center recently held an educational seminar on end-of-life issues and the Five Wishes document. Another time, a local historian told attendees about the history of Lancaster, and still another seminar instructed them on how to make homes safer by rooting out danger spots.

Of course, the more services and benefits that are offered to meet demand, the greater the need for organization and business structure. The Downtowners has a financial sponsor in a business development group, the Lancaster Alliance. Through that relationship, the Downtowners has 501(c)(3) status and can receive tax-deductible contributions and grants.

Additionally, the Downtowners hired its first staff member last fall, a program director, who is enabling it to meet increasing member demand for services. She is responsible, for example, for compiling a list of plumbers, electricians, and others into a provider network. Eventually the Downtowners would like to introduce health care services for members, but this calls for “real big picture thinking,” says Houser, because it will require pooling financial resources, agreeing on a health care delivery model (single- vs. multiple-provider), and other steps that will test the village’s capacity to build consensus.

So far, Downtowners has been able to hold annual member dues at \$40 for individuals and \$60 per couple. Meeting additional needs, such as health care delivery, will require creative financing in some cases and perhaps à la carte services in others. One of the decided advantages of the virtual form of intentional community, however, is that it doesn’t have the monetary tripwires associated with physical housing that so often are encountered in shared-living residences. “Our model doesn’t involve buying real estate,” explains Houser. Still, Houser says the Downtowners could accommodate a subgroup that wishes to, for example, buy a warehouse and build six units within.

One of the decided advantages of the virtual form of intentional community is that it doesn't have the monetary tripwires associated with physical housing that so often are encountered in shared-living residences. The model doesn't involve buying real estate.

“We Didn’t Reinvent the Wheel”

After Lancaster Downtowners began to form, they quickly learned that they were not the only such group in the country. In fact, there are currently 13 such villages throughout the country—in locations including Washington, DC; Greenwich, Connecticut, Bronxville, New York; Palo Alto, California, and elsewhere—with another 50 on the drawing board.

“We didn’t reinvent the wheel,” says Houser, choosing instead to turn to the original village, Beacon Hill Village (BHV), for help with some of the technical aspects of formation. BHV, which formed in 2001, figuratively and literally “wrote the book” on this model of intentional community. (Please see the

sidebar article.) Its 450 members dot the Boston neighborhoods of Beacon Hill, Back Bay, West End, South End, North End, Charlestown, and the Waterfront. BHV, which has a staff of seven to meet membership need, is busy forming an online network to link the actual and prospective villages together. According to recently hired village-to-village coordinator Rita Kostiuik, “We all have so much in common, yet are so different from one another

in terms of geography, needs, and grassroots activity. There’s a lot we have to learn from each other, and the resources are coming into place that allow us to do it.”

For the Downtowners, the quaintness, the homeyness of small-city life puts a sparkle in the eye of its members. “Retirees here are able to connect with the city. The more isolated we feel, the more we’re afraid,” says Shapiro. “The Downtowners helps us to be integrated.”



Rudy M. Yandrick is a freelance writer who resides in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. He has a longstanding interest in intentional community and has visited several in south-central Pennsylvania.

Want to Build Your Own Village?

Beacon Hill Village (BHV), which began the virtual retirement village concept in 2001, has received over 3000 inquiries in the last three years. On their website, www.beaconhillvillage.org, they provide advice on starting a village, with steps including:

- Form a core group of people passionate about staying in their own homes
- Research your village: number of elders, income, geographic area, other programs
- Implement a market survey to see what people in your area want and to determine interest

- Contact health and other providers; get discounts from vendors for your members
- Write a business plan
- Raise seed money
- Form a board and hire a director

Additionally, BHV has published a how-to book, called *The Founder’s Manual*. It provides advice and experiential information on the village launch, successful business model, community surveying, marketing, business planning, fundraising, publishing a newsletter, and so forth.



Death of Two of Australia's Intentional Community Elders



Placid Spearritt, of New Norcia, and Peter Hamilton, of Bodhi Farm, two highly respected elders of the Australian intentional community movement, have recently died.

Placid Spearritt was Abbot of the Benedictine monastic community at New Norcia, by far the oldest intentional community in Australia (founded circa 1859). I was fortunate to have spent some time with him while staying with the New Norcia monks in 2007, while researching and writing an article for COMMUNITIES magazine (see COMMUNITIES # 139, Summer 2008, pp. 8-12).

Placid (nee Selwyn) Spearritt was born in Bundaberg, Queensland, and grew up there and in Brisbane where he trained as a high school teacher. After only one year of teaching, however, he decided that vocation was not for him. He next worked as a librarian at the University of Queensland, a position through which he developed and honed his profound intellectual abilities. In 1958, he left Australia and sailed to England where he joined

Ampleforth Abbey, and there he was professed a monk in 1960.

Placid Spearritt came to New Norcia, Western Australia, in 1983, to serve as the monastery superior, and he retained that position until he died, aged 75, on 4 October 2008.

One of my clearest memories of my time with Placid Spearritt was when he told me, "Our duty, in the first place, is to be good monks, to be prayerful, happy, charitable monks, loving one another... I have a faith in God that He does not bring about monasteries like this [New Norcia] in order to let them die out."

His fellow monks and family members buried Placid Spearritt at New Norcia, in a very touching service, on 21 October 2008.

Peter Hamilton, of Bodhi Farm community, died on 23 October 2008, aged 84.

Peter was born in Melbourne but grew up in Brisbane, Queensland, where his father was Headmaster/Principal of a prestigious private school. Towards the end of

(continued on p. 76)



Top: Placid Spearritt.

Bottom: Peter Hamilton.

Bottom right: Peter Hamilton's funeral in the rainforest at Bodhi Farm community.



Denise Nagorcka, Bodhi Farm



(Re)localization:

An Exploration in Local Currencies

Fortunately, life doesn't always go as planned. It's full of twists and turns, bumps, and unexpected detours. We start off in one direction, only to get tossed around, lost for a while, and then thrown out into unfamiliar territory. But, that's the beauty of it. For in this wandering, we learn invaluable lessons that we never could have expected.

Three months ago, when I proposed this article, I had grand plans. I had recently arrived in Vancouver, British Columbia (I'd been here only about one month) and I was going to start a local currency—a Local Exchange Trading System (LETS), to be exact. This LETSystem was going to be off the ground and running by today, when I was going to explain to you my experiences setting up LETSystems in both Los Angeles and Vancouver.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with LETS, a LETSystem is a type of local currency—a third-party computerized barter system. However, unlike in traditional barter, you do not have to offer something to the person you are trading with. Instead, you exchange “credits,” which basically means commitments to offer something to the system as a whole.

The ideas behind LETS speak of amazing opportunities to conquer scarcity. Since LETS credits are created every time a transaction occurs and it's completely acceptable to have a negative balance, there is never a shortage. LETS works to create alternatives to the traditional global economy, keeping transactions local and establishing a more inclusive economic system.

Before arriving in Vancouver, I set up a LETSystem in Los Angeles, based out of the Los Angeles Eco-Village. The system was still fairly small when I left L.A., but it had much potential for growth. I was inspired by this experience and excited by the prospect of setting up a LETSystem in Vancouver.

Coincidentally, soon after arriving in Vancouver, I connected with Village Vancouver (VV), an amazing organization that is working to create neighborhood villages or ecovillages around the city of Vancouver. Through a variety of activities such as dialogs on “How to Create a Village in a City,” community dinners, gatherings focused on cultivating food and community, and tabling at local events, VV creates ways for neighbors to get to know each other.

VV was excited by the idea of setting up LETSystems around the city of Vancouver, and I was enthusiastic to have the opportunity to create another local currency. To make it even better,

one of my professors agreed to let me count my working with VV to set up a LETSystem as part of my coursework.

I had it all figured out. I would hold a few community meetings, use the knowledge I had gained from setting up the system in L.A., and I would easily have a LETSystem up and running in three months. Only, things didn't go exactly as planned...

In order to have setting up a LETSystem in Vancouver count for my coursework, I had to write a paper about it. This meant I had to delve into the academic literature on LETS to have viable sources to cite in my paper.

Reading the academic literature on LETS was an eye-opening experience for me. Prior to reentering academia, I had never seen this literature. When I set up the LETSystem in L.A., I was working for CRSP (the Cooperative Resources and Services Project), a non-profit. I never thought of looking into the academic literature and, even if I had, I would not have had the same access to it as I do now, as a graduate student. The information I had access to in L.A. was limited to book and online sources, most written by Michael Linton, the founder of LETS, or people who started LETSystems. All of the information was positive and inspiring.

The academic literature, on the other hand, was not very positive. Since the academics were coming from a detached perspective, they were more inclined to offer critiques. The academic literature on LETS taught me that LETSystems might not be the best mode of alternative currency, especially for an urban environment.

While LETS is alleged to address issues of social exclusion, the academic articles I read showed that this is not always the case. A majority of members involved in LETSystems in the United States are college graduates under the age of 50. Furthermore, LETSystems are supposed to add goods and services into one's life that one normally wouldn't have access to in the traditional economy. However, multiple studies found the average transactions per person per year to be about 12. If people are using a local currency only once a month, how much good is it really doing?

In an attempt to gather more information on LETS, I decided to reach out to people who previously attempted to set up a LETSystem in Vancouver, as well as other communities using LETSystems in Canada. What I learned from these people was that LETS works best within a tight-knit community. I was told



Top left: Dianne and Rand. Below left: Lee and Kathryn. Middle: Activity Board. VV retreat participants mapping out the projects they hope to accomplish over the next three years. (There's a whole column for creating a sharing economy!) Right: Village Vancouver Steering Committee and friends retreat on Keats island to vision, plan, and build community.

that contradictory to all of the claims that LETS can be used to form community, LETS works best if you work within existing communities. I was encouraged to target specific populations that already have ties.

Instead of finding all of the answers needed to create LETS, I was left with several questions. Which comes first, the community or the community currency? Can a currency be used to create community? Or, do you first need to build community before you can create a currency? Maybe you need a bit of both.

This past weekend, I attended a retreat for Village Vancouver with all of these questions on my mind and more. A few weeks ago, we made the decision to start looking into other alternatives. We wouldn't take LETS off the table, but we would explore other forms of local currency—possibly, a currency that is based on time, like Time Banks. Or maybe a physical local currency that could be traded for the Canadian Dollar. This wouldn't address scarcity, but it would help keep funds local.

Over the course of the retreat, I had various conversations about LETS and local currencies. One common thread that I noticed throughout my conversations was the issue of creating a currency that was money-based. If we are still putting monetary values on people's work, are we really moving away from our current economic situation? Yes, we are moving towards a more local alternative. But isn't part of building alternatives to our current economic system building trust?

I believe we need a paradigm shift—to break free from ideas of competition, hoarding, and exploitation, and to shift to ideas of sharing, cooperation, and the incorporation of community values into our economic system. What would happen if we were to create a system that was based more on trust and an understanding that we would take care of each other and be there for each other when we are in need?

Yet part of what I've learned is that despite the flaws of the capitalist model, we can't reject everything that comes with it. With the good comes the bad, and with the bad comes the good. There are lessons we can learn from capitalism. Cooperation

and sharing do not have to mean scarcity, which unfortunately they often have in the eco- and communities-minded world (at least in my world). In our search for good we often forget about ourselves. And in our rejection of capitalism and this extravagant materialistic culture, we often end up rejecting ideas of abundance. Yet we can be eco-friendly, cooperative, abundant, and not green-washy.

I don't have the answers yet, but I am working with Village Vancouver to create some. We are working to find solutions that are locally relevant. We haven't decided upon a specific direction yet, but there has been talk about possibly moving in multiple directions. One system would be based on trust and community values—a system that doesn't count mock currency or value one person's services more than another, but trusts that everyone will be taken care of. Another system would be more monetary-based, working to keep funds local and create a stronger local economy.

I plan on continuing to research local currency initiatives worldwide as I explore solutions for Vancouver. I hope to share further experiences of Vancouver's initiatives as well as other communities with you in this Community Economics column. If you have any questions you would like answered or know of any communities I should look into, please contact me at alison@ecovillage.org. (The academic sources used in this article were written by Ed Collom; Theresa Aldridge, et. al; Gill Seyfang. For those of you interested in reading the academic literature mentioned, please email me for full sources.) ❀

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Ethan Hughes

Poetry in Community

To have great poets there must be great audiences too.
—Walt Whitman

Think back to your childhood, and chances are you'll find fond memories of poetry somewhere in there. Maybe it was someone reading Dr. Seuss or Shel Silverstein to you. Maybe it was a jump-rope rhyme or another bit of children's folklore. Maybe you had a teacher who sparked students' interest in reading and writing poetry. And it doesn't have to stay solely in your memory.

Words and deeds are the warp and weft of community. Poetry, in particular, lends itself well to communal activities. It's concise, it's powerful, and it touches a common thread in most people's lives. At some times in history, poetry has been tremendously popular as a way of spreading news, celebrating culture, and commenting on social events. All of those qualities make it

worth weaving into your community. Here are some ideas on how you can do that.

Reading Poetry

You don't have to be a poet in order to enjoy poetry, and when you're reading poetry, you don't have to do it alone. Poetry is fun to share with other people.

Poetry readings celebrate poetry by reading it aloud. This is free entertainment that you can make yourselves. In a small group, people can simply stand one at a time to read. In a larger group, set up a microphone so that everyone can hear without straining the reader's voice. A reading can feature classic poems, original poems, or a combination of both. Readings make a good regular program. If your community holds a poetry read-

ing once a month, consider choosing different themes: rhyming poems, ethnic poems, poems about nature, etc.

Discussion groups give everyone a chance to share their reactions to poetry. You might hold a discussion after a poetry reading, with refreshments. Discussion groups can also be modeled after a book club, in which everyone reads the same poem—or better yet, a whole chapbook—then gathers to talk about it. Some books, especially those intended as class texts, come with questions. You can also make up your own; good questions include: “What was your favorite line or verse?” “How did the poet set the emotional tone?” and “What personal experiences did this poem remind you of?” People’s reactions to poetry reveal their thoughts and feelings, making this a great way of getting to know each other or deepening your connections.

Attending events is another possibility. Libraries, coffeehouses, and bookstores often host poetry readings, book signings, and other activities. If you go as a group—especially if you wear matching t-shirts or other identifiers—it becomes a way to give people a glimpse of community life. Alternatively, you could invite a local poet to visit your community for a reading and/or book signing.

Create traditions that feature poetry. Many families gather to read “A Visit from St. Nicholas” by Clement Clarke Moore (aka “’Twas the Night Before Christmas”) every Christmas Eve. They may choose a certain person to read it, or have each person read one verse in turn. What holidays or special occasions does your community observe? When are the quiet times you gather? What poems would suit those occasions?

Writing Poetry

Poetry is more than old words in old books. It can speak of your own experiences and worldview. It can be fresh and wild and wacky. It can be anything you want it to be. And it’s a lot easier to write than most people think. Don’t worry about getting everything perfect the first time—just have fun with it.

Workshops can be silly or serious, one-time events or regular activities. For a one-time workshop, have someone present the basics of poetry writing and encourage everyone to write a poem. Borrow instructions and exercises from books or online resources. Avoid criticism; just enjoy the chance to play with words.

Alternatively, a group of writers in community might want to concentrate on honing their skills. A weekly or biweekly meeting could include the presentation of a featured form or technique, group feedback on previous poems, and a chance for people to pass around newly written poems for others to read. Explore descriptions of communal life or principles. Writers can also give each other support and encouragement on submitting poems for publication. If the poems get published, mentioning your home in the writer’s bio can help spread the word about intentional community.

Civic poetry celebrates the history and events of a particular society. It can be associated with a tribe, town, or nation. It records triumphs and tragedies, scandal and valor, insights and difficult issues. In Celtic tradition, poetry was composed,

performed, and preserved by Bards. They would compete in great contests open to the public. The winner would then claim, usually for one year, the “chair” or “seat” of the local town or community. He or she would become their official Bard, called on to compose poems about births, deaths, marriages, current events, and other matters concerning the people. If your community is rich in poets, consider establishing a chair. However, anyone can contribute to the process of recording your history and culture in verse.

Certain forms of poetry are intended for collaboration. There are at least two different versions of “chain poem”—one in which poets start with a set of words around which to write a poem, and one in which each poet contributes a line before handing the poem to the next person. Line-by-line composition also makes a fun game during road trips, especially if you use passing signs and landmarks for inspiration. These poems are usually free verse, without rhyme or meter, so they’re very easy to create.

Another form of collaborative poetry establishes a frame that all the verses match. Some children’s games involve making up verses in this manner. Here’s an example that I wrote:

*The night brings darkness and day brings light;
I bring the power of dreams in flight.*

You could keep the first line and have each person invent a new second line; there are dozens of rhymes for “light” and it would make a catchy chant that way. For a more adventurous method, keep just the pattern:

*[A] brings [B] and [C] brings [D];
I bring [phrase rhyming with D].*

Collaborative poetry is an easy way to get people started, because it seems less daunting than writing a whole poem by yourself. It also encourages teamwork.

Saying It Sideways

You can say anything in any language, but whatever language you speak, some things take longer to say than others. How many times have you wanted to say something, only to realize that there wasn’t a word that fit exactly? Indeed, as Robert Frost put it, “Poetry is what gets lost in translation.” Sometimes it’s easier to say things sideways, using figurative language to talk about things that are hard to express otherwise. In literature, poetry is the format most densely packed with figurative language. People often turn to poetry for matters of love, spirituality, philosophy, and other elusive topics.

Metaphor is a direct comparison of two different things: “ice-cold,” “brazen courage,” “you are the apple of my eye.” It creates many hidden connections in our language—how many of us see “spending time” without spotting the financial metaphor in it? Metaphors help shape the way we think about things.

Simile is an indirect comparison of two different things. It uses the words “like” or “as” to join the parts: “light as a feather,” “we are like the fingers of a hand.” A simile is a little more visible

(continued on p. 79)

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REACH

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

You may use the form on the last page of Reach to place an ad. THE REACH DEADLINE FOR ISSUE #143/Summer 2009 (out in June) is April 24.

The special Reach rate is only \$.25 per word (up to 100 words, \$.50 per word thereafter for all ads) so why not use this opportunity to network with others interested in community? We offer discounts for multiple insertions as well: \$.23 per word for two times and \$.20 per word for four

times. If you are an FIC member, take off an additional five percent.

Please make check or money order payable to COMMUNITIES, and send it, plus your ad copy, word count, number of insertions and category to: John Stroup, Business Manager, COMMUNITIES Magazine, 10385 Magnolia Road, Sullivan, MO 63080; message line: 573-468-8822; email: ads@ic.org. (If you email an ad, please include your mailing address, phone number and be sure to send off the check at the same time.)

Intentional communities listing in the Reach section are invited to also visit our online COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY at <http://directory.ic.org>. Listing on our web site is free and data from the site is used to produce our print version of the COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY, with a new edition coming out biannually. Contact: directory@ic.org for more information on being listed in the upcoming COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

2009 NATIONAL COHOUSING CONFERENCE is in Seattle, WA from June 24-June 28. The theme for 2009 is "Growing Community!" While we've hosted conferences in the past, we have graduated to an annual conference to accommodate the increased interest in the growing cohousing movement. This conference is THE venue for those who already live in cohousing, who are currently seeking a community, and professionals serving cohousing communities to learn new ways to "grow community". This conference is also the ideal place for newcomers to learn about cohousing - whether you are exploring the idea of living in community or a public official trying to understand how to encourage community oriented development. Come to the 2009 National Conference and see the power of community for yourself. With more than 50 program offerings - featured speakers, workshops, seminars, and tours-there's something for everyone! For full information visit the Cohousing Website at www.cohousing.org/conference.

COMMUNITIES WITH OPENINGS

COLUMBIA ECOVILLAGE, Portland Or-

egon (moving in February-April 2009). Live in a community that values sustainable city living. Our family friendly cohousing community on 3.73 acres offers extensive orchards, gardens, and vineyards within easy reach of downtown Portland via public transit. Renovated for energy efficiency, healthy indoor air, and environmental responsibility, the condominiums include studios, one bedroom, two bedroom and three bedroom units with common use of a community farm house, a laundry room a crafts room and space in a storage building. Only a few units are still available. www.columbiaecovillage.net or: joe@columbiaecovillage.net.

COMMON GROUND, Jefferson National Forest, Virginia. Find sacred space: Intentional community of 30 years with cooperative focus on productive large gardens has homesites available, located in picturesque area near college town of Lexington, VA. Live in the quiet beauty of nature in the wooded mountains of the Jefferson National Forest. Seeking young families/ individuals of a hard-working homesteading mindset/ spirit to add to our small but growing group. Kids welcome. 80-acre land trust, community spring, cold pond, warm swimming pond, pavilion, schoolhouse/ visitor's center. Lots of potential for creating a sustainable future. Transitional housing currently available with partial work-exchange possible. Interested visitors contact Glen Leasure at 540-463-4493.

DANCING RABBIT, Rutledge, Missouri. We are a growing ecovillage of more than 30 individuals and are actively seeking new

members to join us in creating a vibrant community on our 280 beautiful acres in rural Missouri. Our goals are to live ecologically sustainable and socially rewarding lives, and to share the skills and ideas behind this lifestyle. We use solar and wind energy, earth-friendly building materials and biofuels. We are especially interested in welcoming natural builders and people with leadership skills into our community. Help make our ecovillage grow! 660-883-5511; dancingrabbit@ic.org; www.dancingrabbit.org.

ELDER FAMILY, Near Cherokee, North Carolina and Smokey Mountain Park and easy drive to Asheville. Your best investment—shared ownership in a loving "family of choice" sanctuary. For active elders with lots of free time to enjoy group activities, such as gardening, hiking, shared meals, spiritual gatherings, fire circles and lots more. Non-smokers, healthy and financially secure. Two new shared homes on eight acres in private cove with private bedroom/office/bathroom and large common kitchen. We are part of a larger community with community building, swimming pool, organic garden, trails and 46-acre spiritual retreat land. See unionacres.org for information on the area and community and click on Elder Family Shared Housing for our web page. 828-497-7102; or email: annariel@dnet.net.

FELLOWSHIP COMMUNITY, Spring Valley, New York. We seek co-workers. Located 30 minutes north of NYC, we are an intergenerational community founded in 1966, centered around the care of the elderly. Now

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West Coast - Fri. August 7 - Weds. August 19

♦ intimacy building ♦ sacred touch ♦ living in the moment ♦ sustainable culture ♦ communication & relationship skills ♦ community building ♦ hugs & cuddle piles ♦ social change ♦ children's program ♦ dance & delight!



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How does New Culture happen?

Network for a New Culture is an all-volunteer, grassroots network; Summer Camp is the heart of NFNC. For 15 years, Summer Camp has grown to include more time, more places, and more people. Smaller gatherings now happen every few weeks, scattered around the country: Oregon, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Arizona, Hawaii, and more. New Culture residential communities include Chrysalis (www.chrysalis-va.org), Heart-on Farm (www.heart-on.org), and La'akea (www.permaculture-hawaii.com).

For more information on this and other New Culture events and activities, contact us at:

Summer Camp East 2009
PO Box 7651
Arlington, VA 22207-0651
sc09e@cfnc.us ♦ 800-763-8136
www.cfnc.us

Summer Camp West 2009
PO Box 51495
Eugene, OR 97405
sc09w@nfnc.org ♦ 800-624-8445
www.nfnc.org/sc

numbering about 150 elderly, co-workers and children, we grow our own fruit and vegetables bio-dynamically. All ages work together in our practical work activities. They include a candle shop, metal shop, wood shop, weavery/handwork group, greenhouse, publishing press, bakery, outlet store and medical practice. The spiritual science (anthroposophy) of Rudolf Steiner is the basis for our work. There is a Waldorf School and several other anthroposophical initiatives nearby. Our lifestyle is an intense social/cultural commitment to the future of mankind. Check out our web site at www.FellowshipCommunity.org. If you are interested in co-working or need additional info, please contact our office at 845-356-8494; or write to: Ann Scharff, c/o The Executive Circle at 241 Hungry Hollow Rd., Spring Valley, NY 10977; rsffoffice@fellowshipcommunity.org.

GLOBAL COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS ALLIANCE, Tubac, Arizona. Founded by Gabriel of Urantia and Niánn Emerson Chase in 1989. Currently 110 adults and children. International members. EcoVillage, green building, sustainable living. God-centered community based on teachings of The URANTIA Book and Continuing Fifth Epochal Revelation (The Cosmic Family volumes). Organic gardens, farm, & ranch. Children's school, landscaping, Soulistic Medical Institute. Spiritual commitment required. Non-spiritual internship program also. PO Box 4910, Tubac, AZ 85646 (520) 603-9932. info@GlobalCommunityCommunicationsAlliance.org; www.GlobalCommunityCommunicationsAlliance.org; www.GlobalChangeMusic.org; www.GlobalChangeMultiMedia.org.

HEARTWOOD COHOUSING, Bayfield, Colorado. Located in southwest Colorado, with easy access to the high peaks of the San Juan Mountains and the red rock canyons of Utah, we are a cohousing neighborhood with a deep sense of community. Built in 2000, we support a population of approximately 40 adults and 20 children in a cozy cluster of 24 homes nestled within 250 acres of pine forest and pastureland. We make decisions by consensus and value open and honest communication to accommodate the diverse needs, backgrounds and perspectives of our members. Find out more about Heartwood and available property: www.heartwood-cohousing.com; info@heartwoodcohousing.com; 970-884-4055.

SANDHILL FARM, Rutledge, Missouri. We are a small family of friends living together on an income-sharing organic farm. We value co-operation, initiative, living simply, caring for our land, growing most of our own food, working through our differences, making good ecological choices, and having fun with our friends. We've been at this for 33 years and continue

to grow in our visions and our capability to realize them. Sound like home? POB 155, Rutledge, MO 63563; visitorscm@sandhillfarm.org; 660-883-5543; www.sandhillfarm.org.

SANTA ROSA CREEK COMMONS, Santa Rosa, California. We are an intergenerational, limited equity, housing cooperative 60 miles north of San Francisco. Although centrally located near public transportation, we are in a secluded wooded area beside a creek on two acres of land. We share ownership of the entire property and pay monthly charges that cover the usual expenses of home ownership. We have kept our costs reasonable by sharing all of the responsibilities of our cooperative and much of its labor. All members serve on the Board of Directors and two committees oversee the welfare of the community. We enjoy a rich social life and a mutual concern for the natural environment. Contact: Membership 707-575-8946.

TRILLIUM FARM COMMUNITY, Applegate Valley, Southwest Oregon. Envision living on magical Land with abundant gravity-flow sweetwater, productive organic gardens, heirloom fruit trees, ponds, creek, waterfalls, river, forest, meadows, historic community buildings, private cozy cabins, excellent solar exposure, long growing season, magnificent wilderness watershed with views of deep

canyons and high Siskiyou Mountains! Envision living with creative people, building and growing community as best friends, trusted business partners, and peers. We're seeking enthusiastic, financially stable and emotionally mature singles, couples and families with some life experiences relevant to homesteading and community, ready for the great adventure of living together as community, 4-6 households on the Land. We believe in these shared core values: Striving for sustainability: growing beautiful abundant food, alternative building, appropriate technology. Vegetarianism: non-cruelty to all. Healing: creating sacred space. Environmental activism: conservation and protection for future generations. Communication: cooperation, compassion, consensus. Education: learning and sharing. Spiritual aesthetics: love, harmony and beauty. Wilderness sanctuary: connecting and caring for the Land and its unique biodiversity, no dogs, much wildlife. Envision joining us, hosting educational/arts/healing programs, retreats, workshops and gatherings through Birch Creek Arts and Ecology Center; living a great life and helping create sustainable futures. trillium@deepwild.org.

TWIN OAKS, Louisa, Virginia. "Not the revolution, but you can see it from here." We are an income-sharing, non-violent, egalitarian community that's been living this lifestyle

for 39 years. We would love to have you visit and right now, we're especially looking for more women members, as well as people in their 30s, 40s and 50s. We can offer you: work in our community businesses, an abundance of homegrown organic food, a thriving social scene, and an established culture of non-violence, feminism and egalitarianism. You can offer us: your talents and skills (or your unskilled enthusiasm) and your desire to live an ecological and income-sharing lifestyle. For information: Twin Oaks, 138-R Twin Oaks Rd., Louisa, VA 23093; 540-894-51126; twinoaks@ic.org; www.twinoaks.org.

COMMUNITIES FORMING

ECOREALITY CO-OP, Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, Canada. EcoReality Co-op is purchasing 37 acres adjoining 63 acres of community farmland on Salt Spring Island in southwest British Columbia. The combined public/private property has 50+ acres of cleared, irrigated farmland (class-2 soils, zone 8-9), two streams, two ponds, and young forest, backed by public parkland. Members share two big houses as we build tightly-clustered natural homes. We seek new members who can contribute approximately half the value of a typical North American suburban house to

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Community Building Companion
50 Ways to Make Connections and Create Change in Your Own Backyard
by Peter D. Rogers, Lisa Frankfort, & Matthew McKay
2002; 128 pages

Are you feeling lost in your town, and seeking a sense of community? Then *The Community Building Companion* is a great place to start! *The Companion* includes practical building strategies that can help anyone find neighbors with common interests, work with others to find solutions to local problems, and discover few ways to have fun. Filled with great ideas!



Creating Community Anywhere
Finding Support and Connection in a Fragmented World
by Carolyn R. Shaffer and Kristin Anundsen
334 pages; paperback
Whether you live in an urban or rural area, are single

or married, reside near or far from your family, you will find the many opportunities explored here to be exciting sources of community. Covers support groups, workplace teams, new forms of residence sharing, social clubs, neighborhood associations, discussions groups, spiritual communities. Profiles successful communities in the United States, offering modes of what works and solutions to overcome difficulties.

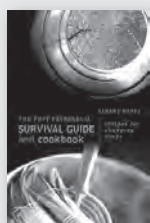


Poster - How to Build Community
painting by Karen Kerney; words by Syracuse Cultural Workers
Watercolor images by Karen Kerney complement text by the Syracuse Cultural Workers community (? SCW 1998). The bright and beautifully-illustrated design lists dozens of ways to build community. Turn Off Your TV Buy From Local Merchants Read Stories Aloud Start A Tradition Ask A Question Seek To Understand Know That No One Is Silent
Though Many Are Not Heard. Work To Change This.
12" x 36". Printed on 100% postconsumer content recycled dioxin free-no chlorine bleaching paper.



Farm Vegetarian Cookbook, The New
edited by Louise Hagler and Dorothy R. Bates
224 pages; paperback
This great collection of recipes was developed by talented cooks from The Farm, an intentional, vegetarian

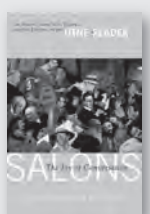
community in Tennessee. The recipes are completely vegan, and completely delicious. Learn how to cook tasty, nutritious and inexpensive meals using no eggs or dairy products and containing no cholesterol, and pick up tips on vegan cooking, including bread basics and working tofu, tempeh and gluten. A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



Post-Petroleum Survival Guide and Cookbook: Recipes for Changing Times
by Albert Bates
2006; 286 pages; 7.5" x 9"; paperback; ISBN: 0-86571-568-8
The *Post-Petroleum Survival Guide and Cookbook* is a blueprint for moving into a changing energy future. It distills the essentials for small-footprint living, leavened with deep wisdom, a wide variety of wonderful recipes, juicy quotes and reminders to enjoy life as we power down.



Rise Up Singing
The Group Singing Songbook
15th Anniversary Edition
edited by Peter Blood & Annie Patterson
2004; spiralbound paperback; 7"x10"; 288 pages; ISBN: 1-8813221-2-2
1,200 songs. What is a community without song? This amazing spiral-bound collection is perfect for sing-alongs, and has just about every song you've ever sung and then some!



Salons
The Joy of Conversation
by Jaida N'ha Sandra, Jon Spayde and the Editors of the Utne Reader; preface by Eric Utne
2001; 221 pages
Salons are lively gatherings where people engage in "big talk" - talk that amuses, challenges, amazes and is sometimes passionately acted upon. This book tells you all you need to know about joining salons, organizing them, and energizing them. Plus, how to attract new members, where to meet, and what topics to explore.



We'Moon Date Book 2009
At The Crossroads
2008; 240 pages; 5.5" x 8"; spiral bound paperback; ISBN: 1-89093-152-0
The *We'Moon 2009 Date Book* is a feast of compelling art that accentuates the wonderful thematic poetry and prose chosen for this edition. It is also functions as a very useful, well-planned women's handbook of earth rhythms and

astrological cycles.



Small Groups: The Process of Change
by William C. Coughlan, Jr.
2007; 167 pages; 8.5" x 5.5"; paperback; ISBN: 0-74144-189-6
This book is a road map for organizing any type of small group. It covers the many paradigms and processes of groups in a thorough and engaging way. Highly recommended.



The World Cafe: Shaping Our Future Through Conversations That Matter
by Juanita Brown with David Isaacs and The World Cafe Community
2005; 242 pages; 9.5" x 7"; paperback; ISBN: 1-57675-258-5
Clear, empowering, precise and potent, *The World Cafe* is indispensable for anyone who wants to engage with others on a level that will make a real difference.



Zen of Groups, The
by Dale Hunter, Anne Bailey & Bill Taylor
196 pages; paperbound
Learn the skills for participating in groups as an individual member; make groups as a whole more effective, and make group meetings more enjoyable.



Ecological Design and Building Schools: Green Guide to Educational Opportunities in the United States and Canada
by Sandra Leibowitz Earley
2005; 160 pages; 10" x 6.5"; paperback; ISBN: 0-97660-541-4
Ecological Design and Building Schools offers a current and comprehensive resource covering the scope of offerings available for those wanting to further their education in the areas of natural and green building. It covers every type of course from hands on workshops to more formal college and university programs.



Passion as Big as a Planet: Evolving Eco-Activism in America
by Ma'ikwe Schaub Ludwig
2007; 219 pages; 9" x 6"; paperback; ISBN 1-43032-196-2
The author of this engaging book gives those wishing to translate their core beliefs to the wider community around them excellent guidance and support. It shows how to combine personal growth and spiritual exploration with social and political activism.

their sustainable future in this project. Prospective members with outstanding skills who can contribute less are encouraged, as well. Contact: Jan Steinman, 250.635.2024, http://www.EcoReality.org/Seeking_members.

ECOVILLAGE FORMING, outside of Kansas City. Seeking investors in small farm with 10 wooded acres being used for non-profit retreat center; organic veggie gardens and chickens. Plus 25 acres in natural wildlife sanctuary. Buy shares in LLC that holds title = owning percentage of entire property. Opportunity to build & own outright a portable cabin. Seeking partnership with people wanting to create a sustainable lifestyle. See www.lightcenter.info, info@lightcenter.info, 785-255-4583.

TRUE NORTH, Canton, New York. Can't afford \$250,000 cohousing units or \$50,000 ecovillage buy-ins? Looking for small, rural community with goal of economic affordability as well as ecological sustainability? Into less sweat gardening and more fun cross-country skiing, and being in on the creative beginning? In spring we will be three full time and one part time person in 50s/60s. About 45 years of community living experience between us. Farmhouse, new barn, 35 acres with stream, fire circle, fenced fields, organic gardens and orchard, artesian spring, back road but only 6 miles from town. Four universities nearby, plus Adirondack Park, St. Lawrence River; Ottawa, and three other intentional communities. We have lots of skills and will be building a cabin in the spring. Looking for a few healthy, spiritual, emotionally mature, peak oil aware people, especially those with green building, farming, permaculture, self-sufficiency, group process skills. Well-behaved dogs and pagans welcome. peagreen@earthlink.net 315-386-2609.

COMMUNITY HOUSES AND LAND FOR SALE

LAND FOR SALE: North Georgia/Gilmer County. Would like to sell to someone who appreciates the beauty of mountains instead of slash & stack developer. 234 acres and 43 acres. Serious inquiries only please. Greg Reese 706-369-1486.

CONSULTANTS

FACILITATION, CONFLICT RESOLUTION, AND CONSENSUS TRAINING. Are your meetings poorly attended, boring, or nonproductive? Could your group's communication skills and decision-making processes use a boost? Does your community need help processing a difficult, emotional, or contentious issue? Eris Weaver can help! 707-338-8589; eris@erisweaver.info; www.erisweaver.info.

GROUP PROCESS RESOURCES available at Tree Bressen's website. Topics include consensus, facilitation, peace-making, blocks and dissent, community-building exercises, alternative formats to general discussion, the list goes on. Dozens or helpful articles, handouts and more—all free. Contact: Tree Bressen, 541-343-3855; tree@jc.org; www.treegroup.info.

INTERNS, RESIDENCIES

HEARTWOOD FARMS at Heartwood Cohousing has openings for 6 interns, one of which may be selected as an assistant program manager with perks. Developing 2 acres organic vegetables and fruits. Please go to www.heartwoodfarmscoop.com for Intern Application and specifics, and www.heartwoodco-housing.com for info on community, bevanis@gmail.com.

SANDHILL FARM, Rutledge, Missouri. Internships in Sustainable Community Living. April 1 to November 1, 2009. If you love gardening and would like to gain experience in organic farming, food processing, tempeh production, homestead maintenance and construction skills, consensus decision-making, group and interpersonal process. Learning is informal and hands-on. Come for ten weeks or longer. More information about the Sandhill Farm Intentional Community and applying for an internship: 660-883-5543; interns@sandhillfarm.org; www.sandhillfarm.org.

PEOPLE LOOKING

COMMUNITY IN MEXICO, on or near beach, already existing or to be created, sought by active retired woman on spiritual path, singer, teacher of music and language, good communicator, international traveler; email: anazafiro07@gmail.com.

SEEKS COUNTERPART, Hawaii. Single male, 40, at small 13-year-old egalitarian community in Hawaii seeks female counterpart. Parenting. Music. Children's theater. Homestead-based elementary school. Permaculture. Write dkern@coconut-wireless.net.

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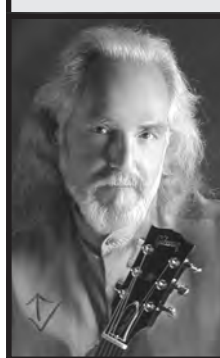
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Marcus Lorusso

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IN COMMUNITY, INTENTIONALLY Part 2

(continued from p. 11)

society. Although we tend to be aware of some of our negative conditioning, most of it is beyond the grasp of our limited worldview. If we're serious about creating a better world, we need to start with ourselves.

If you should happen to hear a glowing report about the perfect community somewhere, one with no rough edges, presume you're not getting the whole story. There's probably a shadow side somewhere that's unexplored and needs to be acknowledged before the members will be able to work through, rather than avoid, the underlying issues.

Conflict is inevitable, and traditionally it is handled so poorly that many of us have learned to dread it and avoid it. However, conflict is a useful indicator of points of non-alignment. Working creatively with these points usually results in tremendous positive growth spurts for everyone involved, both individually and collectively. The key to using conflict constructively is to get the affected parties to believe that a solution is possible, and to commit their best effort to finding a solution that works for all.

Every one of us brings along our own baggage wherever we go, and a supportive cooperative environment is the best possible place for us to explore our personal growing edge. It will prove to be the most challenging and frustrating inner work we've ever attempted, but if we pick the right people to work with, and approach it with the right attitude, it's entirely worth it—the best path available for actualizing our full potential. ✱

This introduction to intentional community is excerpted from an article in COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY 2007. Author Geoph Kozeny was a long-time COMMUNITIES contributor and well-loved "peripatetic communitarian" before his untimely death in October 2007. The first volume of his "Visions of Utopia," a full-length video documentary on intentional communities, appeared in 2002, and a second volume has just been released (see fic.ic.org/video/).

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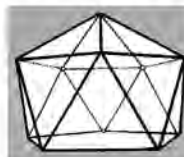
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#142

COMIN' HOME TO THE RAINBOW *(continued from p. 33)*

ceremonies, spontaneous music jams, theater performances, dancing, councils, and even roving "hug patrols." The population and energy continue to grow until the peak days, after which clean-up begins and everything is removed and disappeared. The last of the skeleton crew might leave a full month after the last "official" day.

Yet every rainbow has its darkness lurking somewhere behind. Though we love each other, we don't always like each other. And we must deal with many conflicts, dramas, and dysfunctions like any other family—like too many dogs, drugs, litter, booze, violence, and legal hassles—yet see the gathering as a place of healing and do our best to deal with these matters in the most loving way possible. The most difficult aspect for me is the ever-increasing police presence and their militaristic use of force to discourage, intimidate, and often physically assault gathering attendees due to a long-standing conflict between the Family and the federal government through the US Forest Service (USFS), which generally regards Rainbows as dirty, pot-smoking criminals, not citizens with rights. After many years of coordinated yet failed efforts with state and local authorities and the courts to stop it, the USFS made a bureaucratic, not democratic, decision in

1994 to require any group of 75 or more to apply for a special-use permit requiring multiple fees, millions in insurance, and leaders to be responsible for the entire gathering. There is evidence that this regulation was created specifically to stop the gatherings, and we see it as a blatant violation of the First Amendment.

We have always worked well with the rangers, and though the Family has made mistakes, we almost always receive a glowing clean-up report. It has been the law enforcement arm of the USFS (known as LEOs) that has consistently targeted attendees for petty traffic violations, illicit drug-use offenses, and identifying "leaders" to sign a permit as a means of making money from the Family. Some Rainbows have done time in jail, many others have been ticketed just for being at the gathering. The US Drug Enforcement Agency, Central Intelligence Agency, and Department of Homeland Security have all infiltrated US gatherings and likely many foreign gatherings as well. At the 2008 National Gathering in Wyoming, mustard pellets—non-lethal bullets filled with tear gas—were fired by LEOs at Kid Village during an arrest of a brother for suspected marijuana possession (this can be viewed on YouTube.com). The USFS office in Washington later issued a national press release stating they were "defending

themselves" after being attacked by "400 Rainbows with sticks and rocks"—a total fabrication, as I was an eye-witness. We have always sought to resolve and heal this ongoing conflict through dialog and in the courts, but have usually lost on the permit issue. Regardless of the LEOs' violent and malicious tactics, we have always kept the peace and have never violently retaliated in any way.

Regardless of the dramas, gatherings are sooooo worth it—a place to heal what ails you. They can really make you feel good. So if you're looking for a Rainbow Gathering, it's only a click away at either WelcomeHome.org or WelcomeHere.org to find out the where's, when's, how's, and why's. We look forward to welcoming you home too! ❁

Scott Shuker has been a Rainbow Family enthusiast since 1990 and a contributor



to COMMUNITIES since 1997 on behalf of the Lama Foundation, where he still maintains a Continuing Membership. He currently lives in the mainstream of Santa Fe, New Mexico while working on his college degree.

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FESTIVALS: TIMES OF HIGH ENERGY

(continued from p. 47)



Gabriela da Silva

festival planning, one question for everyone is: what would you really, really like to do—where is the highest energy for you? For one person it could be offering a morning dance; the next person wants to speak in public for the first time about issues that really touch her; another one wants to be outside of the crowd and likes to serve in the kitchen; others love creating a party. Sharing these wishes is very important and when the energy is really high, the group will do its best to make it possible for each person to do her most desired job. On the other hand, some jobs really need to be accomplished in a festival, whether anyone especially wants to do them or not. This balance between both sides—individual preferences and group needs—is one of the main issues in every communal life. How can I follow my interests and my fire and at the same time consider the whole? Sometimes the most challenging option is to do just what is needed.

A team of three to four people organizes the festivals, creating the basic idea and inviting people who could inspire our community and the ideas we are working on. We invite people whom we want to know and maybe even collaborate with. This team is responsible for the general coordination.

Since all community members take part, we also always have to deal with the conflicts that exist in the community. The festivals are the times in the year when we show guests our inner processes and how we interact as a community. Just as you clean your house before guests come, we also try to clean our conflicts before the festivals, so that the spirit of commu-

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nity can flow and inspire us as well as the guests. For our community, these shared experiences are engines for our development, and help us to feel that we are one organism. In daily life sometimes this feeling can get lost, because everyone has his or her own profession to earn money, so the festivals help us to regain the feeling of belonging within the circle of our fellow community members.

The festivals also help us to open that feeling up to guests, because every one that comes here is part of the big organism of "community." A living organism is an open organism, so in the festivals we integrate the guests in our process of community, looking for inspiration from them as well, and trying to create the biggest possibility every time. The same process employed in the job distribution in preparation for the festival takes place here: we try always to follow the highest energy. So it may happen that some people prepared an event but we feel that a different energy is now needed and we change plans. The most important thing is the moment and what is most real, not the plans you made before.

The guests value this, because they feel that they are always part of a living process: community. Many people come repeatedly over years and use this place to get new energy. We often hear feedback from people that they were inspired to give up their resignation in life and feel again that it is worth opening their hearts to others and to the world—that there is hope. And that is what we want to learn more and more, and to share: a different world is possible when we are the change we want to see in the world. ❀



Barbara Stützel, 42 years old, is a psychologist, singer, and actor (www.saltovitale.eu). She likes to use the force of creativity for development within persons, groups, and regions. She has lived at ZEGG since 2001 (www.zegg.de).

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DEATH OF TWO OF AUSTRALIA'S INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY ELDERS

(continued from p. 57)



the Second World War, Peter trained as a fighter pilot but was not needed for active service. He then moved to Sydney where he completed an architecture degree at the University of Sydney as well as a diploma in sculpture at the National Art School. He worked in the 1950s as a filmmaker and music producer, co-founding "Wattle Records and Films," and sparking interest in traditional Australian bush music. In the 1960s, Peter lived for some time in Australian Aboriginal communities where he studied and extensively documented Aboriginal shelter construction techniques. He also helped to set up the critically important film archives at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

In 1972, Peter co-founded Bodhi Farm, in northern New South Wales, one of Australia's oldest, best known, and most inspiring and influential intentional communities. Peter became politically active in promoting the intentional community movement across Australia, helping to establish PanCom (Pan Community Council), a network to support and promote intentional communities.

Peter was a source of inspiration and wisdom for many younger communards, as well as to those of us studying this movement. As part of my research and writing




work, Peter and I often communicated by phone or email, and I stayed with him several times during my field research, as he also stayed at my home in Brisbane.

According to a recent program on ABC radio, "Over the 80 years of his life Peter Hamilton has been a pilot, sculptor, record producer, filmmaker, architect, anthropologist, intentional community member, activist, and parent."

Peter Hamilton was buried at Bodhi Farm, on 1 November 2008. At his funeral, over 100 family, friends, and fellow community members gathered to pay their loving respects. They carried Peter's remains to Bodhi Farm's rainforest, where his flower-strewn cardboard coffin was gently buried in the soft, rich forest earth.


Placid Spearritt and Peter Hamilton were remarkable people. The world is a better place because of their lives and passionate endeavours—and a poorer place because of their deaths. ❀

Bill Metcalf, PhD., a semi-retired professor of environmental science at Griffith University in Brisbane, is author of nine books on community, including The Findhorn Book of Community Living. He is Fellow of the Findhorn Foundation in Scotland, and a past president of the International Communal Studies Association (ICSA).



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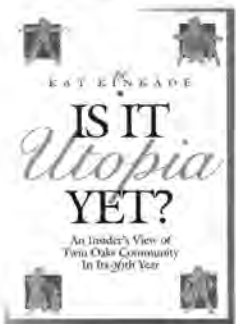
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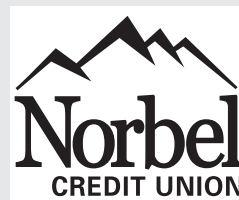
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POETRY IN COMMUNITY (continued from p. 61)

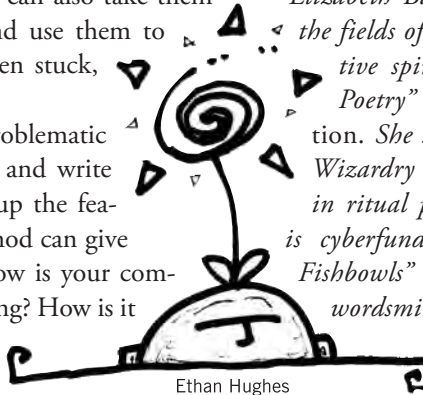
than a metaphor, with a smooth flow because you know it's a comparison.

Allusion is an expansion of one thing by comparing it to something famous: "Let's buy the round table." "We're not in Camelot." "I know, but Arthur had a point about equality." Historic figures, myths and legends, religious texts, and great works of art or literature all make excellent bases for allusion.

Any of these techniques would make a good theme for a poetry reading or workshop. However, you can also take them outside the context of poetry proper and use them to shake loose a conversation that has gotten stuck, by creating a new way to talk about it.

Write down some features of the problematic topic; choose a few objects or processes and write down their features; then try to match up the features in the two columns. The same method can give you new images of your community. How is your community like a class? How is it like a building? How is it like painting a picture?

These are just a few threads to get you



started. What can be done with poetry is as diverse as poetry itself. Talk it over with other folks in your community. Find out what kinds of things they would enjoy doing. Also check with your friends in other communities; a poetic activity that works well in one place is worth trying elsewhere. Likewise if you discover one that works for you, share it with other people. Love, life, language—poetry is where it all comes together. ❁

Elizabeth Barrette writes poetry, fiction, and nonfiction in the fields of gender studies, speculative fiction, and alternative spirituality. Her article "Appreciating Speculative Poetry" appeared in Internet Review of Science Fiction. She serves as Dean of Studies for the Grey School of Wizardry (www.greyschool.info), where she teaches classes in ritual poetry and speculative poetry. Her newest study is cyberfunded creativity, including the popular "Poetry Fishbowls" on her blog The Wordsmith's Forge (ysabetwordsmith.livejournal.com). She supports the growth of community in diverse forms and is active in local organizations.

Recommended Resources

"Academy of American Poets," by various authors, 1997-2008. Includes poetry, articles on how to write it, and other resources. <http://www.poets.org/>

The Adventures of Dr. Alphabet: 104 Unusual Ways to Write Poetry in the Classroom & the Community by Dave Morice. Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 2007. Fun and unusual methods and forms of poetry.

The Bardic Handbook: The Complete Manual for the Twenty-First Century Bard by Kevan Manwaring. Gothic Image Publications, 2006. Comprehensive guide to the history of Bards, their role in community, and how to become one; numerous exercises for reading, writing, and reciting poetry and stories.

Best Remembered Poems edited and annotated by Martin Gardner. Dover Publications, 1992. A good anthology of poems most people should know.

The Book of Forms: A Handbook of Poetics—Third Edition by Lewis Tresco. University Press of New England, 2000. Instructions for writing many specific forms; also discusses theory, techniques, and vocabulary.

"The Chain Poem, a Way of Breaking the Ice" by Ingrid Wendt, *The Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 2, Spring 2003. Instructions for a class activity on writing poetry; for community bonding, try having everyone use the same base words. <http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/580>

"Collective Poetry," by various authors, Wikipedia, March 3, 2008. Description of historic and modern renditions of poetry composed by groups.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collective_poetry

Composing Magic: How to Create Magical Spells, Rituals, Blessings, Chants, and Prayers by Elizabeth Barrette. New Page Books, 2007. Covers writing tools and techniques, basic and advanced poetic forms, magical/spiritual uses, sample poems, and exercises.

Creating Poetry by John Drury. Writer's Digest Books, 1991. Ideal introduction to writing poetry; covers style, form, elements, with sample exercises and poems.

"Haiku for People" edited by Kei Grieg Toyomasu, January 10, 2001. Instructions and examples of classic and modern haiku. <http://www.toyomasu.com/haiku/>

Immortal Poems of the English Language edited by Oscar Williams. Washington Square Press, 1952. Another anthology of classic poems, still available in affordable mass-market paperback.

The Random House Rhyming Dictionary edited by Jess Stein. Random House, 1960, 1986. A pocket guide featuring rhymes of one or two syllables, with a short glossary of poetic terms.

The Science Fiction Poetry Handbook by Suzette Haden Elgin. Sam's Dot Publishing, 2005. Explains how poetry works and how to use its mechanics to your advantage, with a topical focus on science fiction; excellent chapter on poetry readings, workshops, and other events.

Twenty-One Novel Poems by Suzette Haden Elgin. Sam's Dot Publishing, 2007. Many of these poems explore human relationships, social issues, and global challenges facing us; there are also author commentaries and group-discussion questions for each poem.

FESTIVALS AND GATHERINGS: MORE IMAGES

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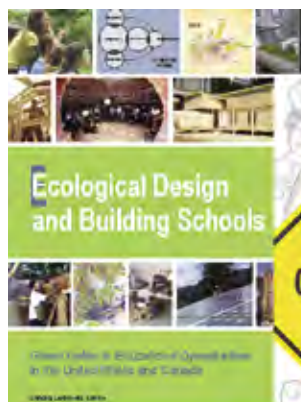
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*Left-hand photos: Celebrations associated with the Global Communications Alliance, Arizona and California.
Right-hand photos: Gatherings at Lost Valley Educational Center, Echo Hollow, and Oregon Country Fairgrounds, Lane County, Oregon.*

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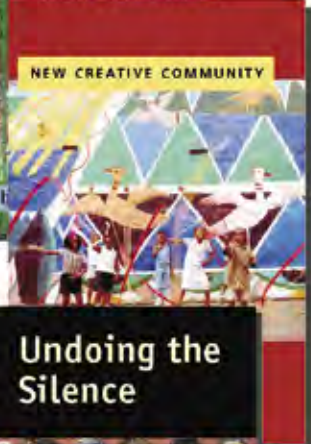
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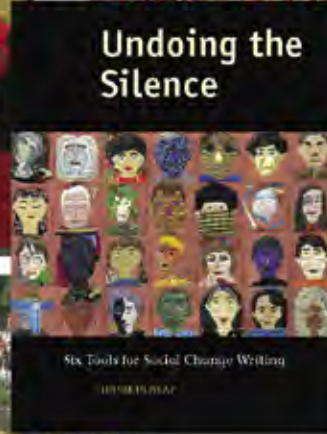
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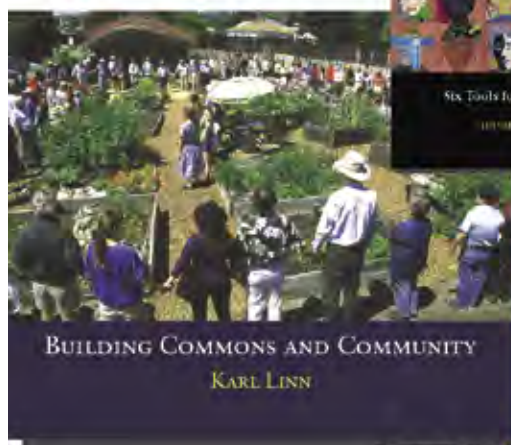
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