Introduction

Like the majority of attempts to start an intentional community (it’s estimated that 90 percent fail), many personal searches for intentional community fizzle out due to lack of adequate information, guidance, or exposure to fellow travelers’ stories.

In both cases, ignorance of the wide array of options possible, and of the breadth of resources and support available through the Fellowship for Intentional Community and allied groups, undoubtedly contributes to the “failure” rate.

This volume on “Finding a Community” and the previous volume in this series, on “Starting a Community,” address the need for one-stop collections of stories to help founders and seekers. They are meant to complement the Communities Directory (available in print and online: ic.org/directory), COMMUNITIES magazine, a quarterly publication focused on Life in Cooperative Culture, and educational resources available through Community Bookstore (ic.org/bookstore).

These books should broaden anyone’s outlook on what is possible and how to pursue their dreams of community. Within each section we hear from a range of voices spanning a great diversity of perspectives and experiences. In this volume, we start with stories about the wide range of intentional community types that one might choose to explore—from income-sharing groups, gift-economy communities, service-oriented groups, and activist communities to groups sharing privately-owned land, cohousing projects, senior-oriented communities, shared living within households, and neighborhood-wide initiatives. We then hear about tips and resources for seeking and visiting communities, followed by an extensive collection of personal stories and reflections resulting from authors’ community explorations, offered in order of original publication date.

Most articles are drawn from the past decade of COMMUNITIES magazine, with one excerpted from the Communities Directory and a few from older issues of COMMUNITIES that were also excerpted in Best of COMMUNITIES, Volume II. Every issue of COMMUNITIES contains further treatments of these same themes, so we hope that you’ll not only learn from these past stories, but also keep up with new ones by subscribing to the magazine (ic.org/subscribe).

Thanks for making use of these resources, and good luck on your community journey!

Chris Roth
Editor, COMMUNITIES
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FINDING A COMMUNITY
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From senior cohousing and village networks to elders’ guilds and more, a broad movement offers alternatives to the aging-industrial complex.

An alternative to conventional nursing facilities offers personalized schedules, a home-like environment, and a holistic approach to aging.

An ex-resident of Casa Caballeros reflects on the wealth she found in the realms of personal growth, shared resources, spontaneous celebration, and financial freedom even in economic downturns.

Especially in financially uncertain times, those seeking the advantages of intentional community living can often find them within a single shared house; basic “how-to” guidelines make the process easier.

Columbia Ecovillage, Cully Grove Garden Community, Kailash Ecovillage, River Road Neighborhood, and elsewhere embody diverse, promising approaches to re-greening our lives.

Whether you’re starting a community or looking to join one, the Communities Directory is an essential resource.

From thought exercise to full-fledged community search and membership, Communities and the Directory have helped guide the way.

Whether starting a community or looking for one to join, identifying your priorities, your approaches to life, and your ranges of tolerance can be essential to successful community living.

The FIC offers diverse ways of finding a community.

If you’re considerate, persistent, and keep these guidelines in mind, the odds are good that you’ll be able to arrange a visit and have a great experience.

As a guest, you can take many steps to get the most out of your experience. As a host, you can do the same.
Planning a Community Visit

The most important thing to remember during your stay is to be honest with yourself and the group.

The Art and Ethics of Visitor Programs

To create a thriving, diverse community, we need to learn how to host and integrate new people in ways that support them as multi-dimensional human beings.

III. COMMUNITY EXPLORATIONS: STORIES AND REFLECTIONS

Excerpts from a Community Seeker’s Journal

The author shares personal observations and insights about the sometimes inspiring, sometimes arduous community-seeking process.

The Dilettante’s Journey, Part I:

How do you pick a community to join if you’re interested in...EVERYTHING?

If his mother was indeed calling him an “indolent, decadent, grape-eating faux-aristocrat,” was she right? Or could he follow through on his dreams of community?

The Dilettante’s Journey, Part II:

How do you pick a community to join if you’re interested in...EVERYTHING?

The author continues his immersive explorations of diverse communities, enjoying experiences ridiculous to sublime.

What Interns and Work Exchangers Say About Us

Some temporary communitarians share lessons learned, insights gained, and input for host communities.

Adventures in Temporary Community: An Interview with Liat Silverman

Superhero rides, Burning Man, and Rainbow Gatherings all demonstrate how living, working, and sharing together offer many benefits, whether in temporary or long-term community.

Burning Man: Experiencing the Playa Community

A first-time Black Rock City “Burner” learns multiple lessons about cooperation, connection, self-expression, and play, and brings them back into her daily life.

Comin’ Home to the Rainbow

A dedicated Rainbow Family member explains the diverse culture, the lingo, the traditions, the politics, and both the “bright” and “shadow” sides of this gathering of the tribes.

Network for a New Culture Camps

Participants in NFNC’s Summer Camps explore intimacy, transparency, freedom of choice, personal responsibility, sexuality, and new ways of being, teaching, and learning.

Review: Visions of Utopia Part Two

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A Community Newcomer Finds Her Rhythm

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It Takes a Community to Grow an Elder

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And I Listen: Staying connected and building trust when adult children choose the “alternative” lifestyle of living in community.

Communities 149, 27–31

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Howling, shouting, cries of despair, and The Pierced One greet a parent on her first visit to her daughter’s adopted community. Luckily, through lots of talking and listening, things improve.

A Mental Health Patient Seeks (But Does Not Find) Religious Community

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Personal retreats at Deer Park Monastery offer the author renewal, connection, and community.
Growing a Culture of Gratitude in Argentine Patagonia: A WWOOFer Experiences Community Living

An organic farming volunteer learns surprising new lessons from his Argentinian hosts—such as how to relax, how to enjoy practical labor, and how to contribute more sustainably by putting personal work first.

Spirituality and Community Living

At the Global Community Communications Alliance, a seeker finds herself in the “Spiritual Olympics,” learning to walk her talk while embracing a cosmic perspective.

The Lighter Side of Community: A Communitarian Appreciates Wanderlust

This Hollywood movie offers both surprising insight and fond parody while taking viewers far from the beaten path, into the world of intentional community.

Journeying on the Ark: One Woman’s Experience at L’Arche

Questioning her community’s philosophy and practices, a live-in caregiver ends her involvement there in order to focus on greater self-expression and self-care.

Transitioning into the Heart of Community

In short-term summer project spiritual communities, group connections are intense but also destined to end.

Cycling toward Sustainable Community: Within Reach

After 6,500 miles of pedaling and 100 community visits, a couple documents the promise of intentional community and cooperative living.

Seeking Community: A Conversation to Shape Our Future

The Tamarack Institute helps people talk and learn together about the possibilities of community.

Reviews:

The Intentional Christian Community Handbook

The Encyclopedic Guide to American Intentional Communities

The Rhythm of Rutledge

Finding Community, Producing Durability: Learning from the rhythms of Rutledge

Filmmakers reflect on their explorations of place and possibility in northeast Missouri’s tri-communities.

Wilderness Journeys Meet Cooperative Culture: Teens in Community on the Trail

Group-building activities and conflict management strategies help teen expeditions thrive.
More new resources explore a wide range of communities both historical and contemporary.

Vision, Money, and Sustainability: Bringing in Renters while Building the Dream

In the quest for sustainability, long-term goals can yield to short-term needs and opportunities, fertilizing new growth in unpredictable ways.

The Dirty Business of Growing a Cohousing Community Farm

A farm is not a clod of dirt; it is more like mud that slips through your hands, gets on your boots, and is tracked all through the community.

The Community We Built

Residents of Guelph, Ontario, build community with intention in an existing suburban neighborhood.

A Baby Boomer Rediscover Community

After falling into a disillusioning “status quo” existence, a baby boomer rekindles his zeal (and ability) to live by his values at Belfast Cohousing and Ecovillage.

Short-Term Vacation Cohousing: A Great Way to Learn

Two retirees discover a way to explore cohousing without long-term commitment—and after several extended visits, decide it’s for them.

Immigrating to a Cohousing Project

As a stranger you can find welcome in the United States amazingly fast—unless you have to deal with the US Customs and Immigration Service.

Finding Community Outside of “Community”

Myriad groups and connections on “the outside” don’t call themselves intentional—but sometimes are.

The Unexpected Journey

A three-month living/learning seminar in alternative communities still resonates three decades later.

Three Kinds of Community—Three Kinds of Experience and Learning

Whether with refugees, in the inner city, or in intentional groups, community holds life-long lessons.

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Terra Firma: A Single Mother Discovers Community
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